Name This Film

I think it was a seventies film. English. I saw it when I was a kid, snuck down in the middle of the night. I was just shaking off a dose of the flu, or something. The doctor didn't know what I had. Just kept sticking her thermometer in me until I eventually passed out.

Anyway, I saw this weird film. Missed the beginning, so I don't know the name of it. Maybe you'll recognise it. First off, there's this mad guy in a rubber suit, like something off Sesame Street, except weirder. He was all yellow with this big round head. His face was just like a man's, but his eyes and his mouth were fused to the shiny rubber of his head. A great effect. Looked like he was really made out of rubber. They had stained his mouth blue, on the inside. Horrible he was, riding around in a little kid's car.

He seemed to be lost in an underground shopping centre, with endless grey corridors like a maze. He would drive around, quite fast, beeping his horn and stopping to look in the shop windows, which were full of odd stuff. Not like shop windows, more like mini theatres. I remember this one display was of a gigantic heart, bristling with thick black hairs like antennas. It filled most of this little room beyond the glass -beating, beating. He watched the heart for a while, this horrible look on his face, and these things began to appear behind the mass of the heart. I think they were little men, but all grey and featureless, covered in webs.

Another thing I recall is a window with this room painted entirely black. Walls, floor, table, chair, and a man who was sat in the chair. The rubber man watched for ages before the scene came to life, the seated figure's mouth gaping open, full of all these weird colours, glittery and alive like snakes or fingers, spilling out and waving about. How they did that effect I don't know. Maybe it wasn't made in the seventies, but just made to look like it was. There were all these other windows with dolls running around being chased by giant spiders and spooky cemetaries spinning around upside down. Weird

shit.

Another thing was this weird house, nothing to do with the yellow guy. It was in the middle of a misty wasteland of pebbles. Pebbles as far as the eye could see. There were these strange women walking about in the mist, holding big bunches of flowers. The flower heads were like flames, fizzling and smoking. The women looked burnt. Burnt rags and mangled up skin. The camera got a good look of these burnt women and then flipped to the interior of the house. A horrible kitchen. There was another woman, not burnt, wearing this bizarre dress made from maps. She was sniffing something in the sink. The camera came close but turned away at the last second. The thing she was smelling must have been like a drug, because she came away looking really off her head, falling about the place and making a weird noise. A creaky wood noise. Only it wasn't her, it was this blue door, slowly opening inwards. This black thing, like a towel, came dangling down over the top of the door. It just hung there, jerking slightly. The woman watched it, fear in her eyes. Then she grabbed the door handle and slammed the door shut on the black towel.

It made an awful raket, screeching and writhing about in agony. I had to turn the volume down so my parents wouldn't wake. Horrible it was. Stuck in my head for years. I must have gone to bed after that, or fallen asleep on the couch, because I don't remember seeing any more of the film. If you know what it is let me know, because it's been bugging me for years.

Black Flames

The burns victim crawls around naked in her back garden giving birth to purple babies that writhe like earthworms. The infants have black smudges for eyes and gaping silent red slits for mouths. I count thirteen babies before the mother collapses on the grass.

Gradually the purple babies pull themselves over the grass towards their mother. I assume it is time to feed.

For breakfast I have scones with jam and cream and a pot of tea. Colourful thoughts stream through my mind like smashed rainbows as I bite into the jammy scones and slurp tea. I cannot detect all my rushing thoughts because they are simply too swift and numerous but now and again I catch a theme or image. Our thoughts are what we are, I realise; how awful to miss out on them. I wonder if they are my thoughts at all if they are too much for me to experience.

(Black flames grip the flesh and turn it inside out deftly. Shoes curl up like stale slices of bread)

I sketch for an hour as a half visible black cat stalks through the room. My drawings are mostly of chairs; chairs with tall ornate backs; chairs with long thin legs. Some of the chairs are not chairs at all but appear to be beasts peering into misty distances. I expect the beasts are predators perusing the snowy landscape for prey or small animals to toy with. The idea fills my chest with pride and maybe a streak of envy. Then I am engulfed by stark horror which causes my pencil to wither like a thin snake that has given up the ghost. I cannot draw now. All I can do is sob and wonder if the beasts I have drawn will find innocent victims some day. It will be my fault if they do.

I am sat in my dining room when the man appears. He is my height and shape and is dressed in my clothes. He looks like me too if you ignore the flaps of skin dangling from his enormous nose. I ignore the phantom and he ignores me, but when my curious eyes flicker in his direction he looks at me instantly, if not at the very same time. He peers at me through eyes the colour of the sky when the sun has dipped itself into the horizon. He fondles my statues and vases and I wonder if he aims to destroy them like I have dreamed of doing in the past.

Then he takes a small porcelain figurine and raises it high. I dare myself to

protest but the words will not manifest in my mind. Instead they sink, half formed, into the quicksand that has always existed in my brain. The man seems to smile but I am not sure; it could be a grimace or a twitch.

A sound fills the room. The sound of something smashing. The man hears it too because he looks startled. He puts the figurine back on the sideboard and vanishes with a puff of pink smoke that takes minutes to dissipate. I rush over to the sideboard and examine the figurine. It is not as it was. The position of the figure has moved. It's hands now cover its eyes.

(Black flames unstitch clothing and turn hair into dark balls of plastic)

There is a knock at the door so quiet that I wonder if I imagined it. I wait and it comes again only louder. I rush through the house to the front door and open it. Standing on the doorstep is a boy; a thin boy with purple skin. He is wearing grey shorts and a grey jumper. On his feet are bright red shoes, the toes of which are rounded and shiny like blobs of blood. His eyes are black orbs protruding from the flesh and his head is sparsely covered in straggly brown hair.

His lipless mouth opens.

"Mh ool har muh muh," he says.

"Excuse me?" I respond my hand trembling as I hold the door.

Then the boy turns and runs away. I smell burning.

Snoozing in the living room I hear screams. There are many people screaming. The screams stop and I snooze some more. A few minutes later I hear more screaming. It is a high pitched shriek of pain or distress. I smell burning, or think I do. I try to sleep as the screaming continues. It is not the first time I have heard screaming in the street. It is a quiet part of town

usually but things do happen. Only last week there had been a fight between two men. A year before a car had crashed into a tree. I had seen it all from my window. I had not ventured out to investigate; leaving the house is dangerous. If you leave your home for too long you will not be certain of finding it again. Or worse: someone may have taken up residence there without you knowing.

The screaming stops and then there is laughter.

See? Pain does not last for long here. Dark things happen but there is always an ice cream van or sweetshop just around the corner. Black things fly across the sky but the sun is not blotted out. And when it is night do not fireworks crash into the darkness?

I eat crisp sandwiches for dinner and drink red wine. My attention is distracted by things moving. The statues on the mantelpiece appear to be writhing like snakes. Some of them are flickering like flames.

I am stood in my library when there is another knock on my door. I go to the window and look down. It is the purple boy again or another like him. There must be a flaw in the glass of the window because the boy's skin looks...messy. He is wrinkled, surely. No boy then, but an old man dressed as a boy. I knock on the window to get his attention and he looks up. He raises his arm and waves, before running off. I can see where he goes this time. He is running next door.

Something Black

Something black is moving around the room. The room is square and

contains a single red chair. A door opens and a purple man enters. His face is a smooth blank. He sits in the red chair and plays an invisible trumpet. The invisible notes fill the room.

Something black approaches the purple man in the red chair. The trumpet notes become shrill. The purple man with no face races to the door and leaves the room. Something black sits in the chair and begins to play an invisible trumpet. The invisible notes fill the room.

The purple man with no face explains to himself the laws of physics in the corridor outside the room. He does this with hand movements. He has red fingernails. One of the nails is cracked. The crack looks like lightning. The lightning is striking a tree. The tree catches fire. People gather around the blazing tree. The people are green. Something black sneaks up on the green people.

Incomparable Denizen

The audience applaud with floppy mitten hands. Their eyes glitter like stars in soft white pudding faces. Their slits for mouths are drooling black goo onto their ragged clothes.

The stage goes dark but the audience still clap their hands. They are barely making a sound. Soon they struggle out of their chairs - still clapping. Still clapping they make their slow way out of the theatre and wobble into the dark streets. Walking as a mob they applaud the parked cars. Their eyes shine in the dark like fires. Their faces are draped in shadow or strips of night. They applaud a dog as it sniffs around the base of a postbox. They move down an alleyway where rats scuttle behind dustbins. The audience clap their gloved hands, their mouths dripping black goo.

Lies Are The Truth

The man picks up his phone and switches it on. He dials a number and pushes the call button. He puts the phone to his ear. The phone rings three times. Then the sound of a woman crying issues from the tiny speaker. The man smiles. He sits down on a brown leather sofa and listens to the woman crying. Her sobbing increases in volume.

Function Creep

Molly was playing with her doll in the back garden. Her mother, Julie, was washing the dishes and watching her daughter with a smile on her face. Her teeth are black. She could hear Sam the dog barking somewhere in the bushes at the end of the garden where Molly liked to make dens.

Later Molly rushed into the kitchen with a wild look on her face.

"Mummy, mummy come quickly!"

"Whatever's the matter?"

"There are fairies at the bottom of the garden. They are kissing Sammy. Come and look."

Molly took her mother's hand and pulled until Julie went with her. Molly had black teeth like her mother.

"Come and look, Mummy. The fairies kissed Sammy and he laid down to sleep."

Julie saw Sammy laid down by the edge of the bushes. He had several red spots on his white fur. He wasn't breathing. Sam had black teeth.

Julie grabbed her daughter tight.

"Get into the house, Molly. It wasn't fairies, it was Daddy."

"Daddy? But I saw fairies!"

"He can come in many forms now. Now that he is working for the witches."

Factoid Dementia

Yellow fat seeped through the holes in the wall. The fat drooped into a golden bowl. James spat blood on the dirt floor;blood that writhed like exposed worms. James waited for the golden bowl to be nearly full before he pulled the lever that closed the holes in the wall. He picked up the bowl of yellow fat and took it to the altar where two brightly coloured cones sat. He took a lighter from his pocket and lit the cones. They began to smoke and then issue red sparks.

"God that has forgotten itself! Come to me now!" James cried as he stared into the trembling darkness of the cave.

And then he felt his mind wobble.

Something black appeared in the back of his brain, like a reminder. It swam through his thoughts until it reached the front of his consciousness. Now he could see it. It was hovering between the fireworks. The fireworks began to dim. The black thing was covering the sparkles with its hands, if they could be called hands.

"I command you, God that has forgotten itself! From the four winds and the four elements I command you!" James ordered as the books had told him how to.

The black thing flopped down like a rag onto the bowl of fat. What it had for a mouth began to slurp the yellow goo.

"I said I command you!" James repeated.

"I heard you, mortal. I heard you. And what is it that you want from me? Gold? Power? Knowledge of arcane matters? What?"

Its voice sounded like stone grinding against stone.

James cleared his throat and built up his courage. This was not the first time he had summoned an entity but it was the first time he had conjured a God.

"I want a girlfriend," James said.

The God stopped eating the fat and raised its head. James saw only a black skull with holes for eyes. He looked away as the books had warned. To stare into the eyes of a God brought madness.

The God writhed towards him and to James' horror placed one of its hands on his head.

"Try internet dating," it growled, before it vanished back into the doorway in James' mind.

Higher Than Him

Jenny, Bill, Hugh and Mandy were enjoying their picnic. They had found a loveley place for it, on a grassy hill speckled with flowers. They had laid their blanket in the shade of a tree out of the sight of the blazing sun and were now drinking hot cups of tea from a flask.

(Fifty dead bodies hung up to rot)

The two couples had been friends since childhood and knew all about each other. They had eaten many picnics in their time and tried to have one at least once a summer. At the moment they were eating cold sausage rolls.

(plucking the eyes out of a dead man's head)

They chatted about their sunny lives and the successes they'd had. Bill had received a promotion and Mandy and Hugh were planning to have a family. They had moved to a larger house which they hoped to fill with children. They wanted a boy and a girl.

(Severing the thumbs and burning the stumps with a blow torch)

Hugh served up some sticky buns on paper plates and they all tucked in, laughing at a joke that Bill had just told. The four of them ate more buns and slurped more hot tea as the clouds sailed across the blue sky.

(A car crashes into a man, ripping his intestines out and splattering them across the road)

Jenny told them all about how her card shop was doing and that she hoped to open another in the next town. Hugh checked his watch and began to tidy up the picnic.

Train Story

The train is canary yellow and passes beneath a red stone bridge. The bridge is covered in a mass of blue toys, all the same shade. The train trundles beneath and enters half a mile of darkness until it reappears by a lake. There is a man who lives in the lake. He has tomato red skin and long grass green hair.

Black machines sit around the jagged edge of the lake. The machines dip grease coloured tubes into the still water. They are feeding.

The yellow train clatters onwards through a dense wood. Some of the trees are decorated in dangling globules of red and blue and orange masses. Large statues of people sit amongst the trees, catching knives of sunlight through the thick foliage. The statues are fighting each other.

The wood ends and wide fields appear. The green and yellow fields stretch to

the sky in all directions and are pinned down with tall towers.

The train stops at a crumbling station. Flags and bunting flap in the wind. A man gets off the train. He is wearing brick orange clothes and a wide brimmed hat the colour of a summer sky. The train hisses and starts up again, leaving the station behind.

The man left at the station vanishes through a door, only to reappear a few seconds later. He is now holding a gleaming sword. He swished it this way and that, energetically pumping it back and forth, before tossing the weapon onto the train tracks.

A single bead of sweat dribbles down his cheek and falls from his chin.

People begin to appear from the doors in the station. They are wearing clown colours and are dancing.

Klein

(Black)

Klein walked down the street. The street was minimal in appearance; rectangles and squares and a token feminine circle.Klein's intentions were submerged in confusion. The stars were ignorant of his motives. The gods were still making notes. Klein passed the bookshop like he was passing a murder. He wasn't about to get involved in a lengthy court case.

Klein was oblivious to himself. He wasn't even aware that he was walking down the street. As far as he knew he was at home in the ditch, sleeping in the suicide tainted mud.

Klein was made of water and mud and discarded bicycle wheels. From his home in the canal he could see a garden centre. They sold gnomes and

flowers and bird seed. But klein took no hope from this. He hoped to see bad things. Klein is not the hero of this story, he's the villain.

Klein passes the butchers. He passes the cafe. He passes the pub.

At some point Klein mentally approves of his present surroundings. It comes like a crack in the curtains. Shine. Light. Blink.

He remembers his human childhood: coastal pubs, pints of orange, packets of crisps, games of space invaders.

Then it is gone. Black machines crowd the scene. Intricate wiring and skeletal structures push into the mind of Klein. He hears the siren song of generators in the night. Throbbing pipes clad in white clay sprout from his subconscious. The canal is calling to him. But not the canal that he sprang from. This canal is the ultimate canal. It is the canal where god drowned.

That is Klein's aim.

Where God slipped and fell. Where God choked on black water. Where God's soul thrust out of panicked flesh into maternal light.

Klein is a monster. We should accept this. We should guard this information like we should guard our bank numbers. Klein was born from a mesh of dismemberment and incineration. His earliest memory is of pain and loss. There is nothing more than Klein's pain. No heaven. No love.

Then it happens.

Klein is passing a shop that seems to have no significance. There is no name above the door. No obvious wares in the window. Yet this establishment seems to be offering something.

In the window lies a mannequin's arm, sporting a sparkly red glove. Klein stops and stares(vast gray concrete machines collide within)(middle eastern countries clash)Klein can do no more than look. He knows he can never touch the glove. The glove is the unknowable.

The unknowable must remain unknown

Otherwise there is nothing left. Nothing left for Klein.

(Black)

The Parade

Soon Grum was passing houses. Then he was walking down streets. There seemed to be a parade on. Wasn't there always a parade going on here? People were throwing multi-coloured streamers and tooting horns. Pink smoke was issuing from the crowds obscuring the buildings and most of everything else. Grum's head began to spin. He didn't know where to look. Here was an orange boulder with legs, dancing. There was a man with fifty arms, puking.

Next came a skeletal man covered in hair, his eyes glowing like red hot coals. Behind him was a dog with human arms and legs. He was lighting a firework. There were explosions going off everywhere.

Blue elephants swayed. Vampires dressed in kilts shimmied. Robot mummies pranced with giant red puppies.Cobwebbed nuns with swords battled each other. Translucent gelatin entities wobbled as slender purple tentacles wound around them. Giant white hands flapped their silvery wings spreading glittery flashes of light. A huge black circle span like a coin as it screeched.

Grum was immediately confronted by what looked like a rolled up carpet with a head at the top and legs at the bottom. Thick hands sprouted from holes in the carpet. Next came a bright orange ball of light that zipped through the air leaving a trail of swear words in its wake. Then Grum was forced to watch a woman give birth to herself. He wasn't quite able to see what was going on but it seemed she expelled her innards out through her belly while her limbs and head seemed to shrink inwards and appear out of the front of her. She did this three times before running off, waving her arms.

Just then a figure swathed in bandages grabbed Grum by the hand and danced. He, she or it was asking Grum to join in. Grum could not think of a way to get out of it without being offensive so he began to dance, skipping from one foot to the other as they both swirled. They danced off down the street passing an eye on legs, a man with two heads that shared a tongue, a coiled spring of some kind of transparent material that boinged into the air, a man with no face dressed up as a king, a cobweb with vague arms and legs and a head that was a spider crawling across the web, a lavatory with a single arm sprouting from the bowl -the arm constructed from diamonds, a scowling face on legs, a floating bed with a human shaped stain on its sheet, a human waterfall of blood, a man exploding and then imploding back into shape...

A robot zombie marched, shouting obscenities at a multi-headed entity with flippers for arms. A green snake looped in the air, chasing a red dot of light. A giant red baby hugged a giant wasp with a human face. A gang of policemen with wrinkled prune faces danced to music issuing from a violin with legs and arms that was playing itself. A red and green striped pyramid span in the air sending out beads of white light. Grum could see images in the white light. Perhaps it was the thoughts of the pyramid?

A man with a red pyramid for a head played the trombone. A ball of green gas with a single red eye floated and danced. A gang of spikey headed women wearing black and silver dresses pushed each other around. A giant grey worm with a leg at each end writhed as it trod about. A woman with four arms was juggling four large spiders. A cowboy with a big blue beak was doing a jig. A tall man made from glass or water cavorted with a vampire with fangs as long and thick as elephant tusks. A blur of colours span on a single leg. Four figures in black cloaks and turbans danced in a circle. Swords hung from their red belts.

A hairy white octopus with a fleshy little ladder poking out of the top of its head undulated its limbs like furry skipping ropes as dwarfish characters with scabby purple bodies and round orange heads leapt over the thrashing limbs. Nearby a tall thin woman with huge glasses and a large mouth danced with a reptilian humanoid wearing laderhosen.

Grum had had enough and headed home.

Just Light

Brant opened the door to his late father's shed. He inspected the shelves looking for a likely jam jar. There were dozens of canisters and jars which contained mysterious chemicals. His father had collected them for years before he died at the seaside. Brant had no idea what was in the containers but he knew the effect they had on him. Had his father known what they were capable of too? Brant suspected his father knew full well.

Brant stretched up to a higher shelf and grasped a dirty looking jam jar with a purple liquid sloshing about in it. He sat down in the armchair that was kept in the shed and unscrewed the jam jar lid carefully. A strong whiff of chemicals met Brant's nostrils. He placed the jam jar under his nose and took a deep sniff. The chemicals stung his nose but he managed to inhale a good amount. Almost straight away he was there. His mind was bloated with euphoria. The knot in his stomach loosened. He was free again.

Brant staggered out of the shed and launched himself around the garden. There were weeds where the roses once sprouted. The bushes at the back of the garden were overgrown. He had no taste for gardening. He had inherited little from his father except the house and the shed and the magic it contained.

"Brool BROOL!" Brant called as he raced to the end of the garden. The bushes poked his hands as he parted them and stared out at the black ditch water that ran beyond the bushes. The sun glinted off the filth like diamonds had been cast into it. Who was to say they were not diamonds? God? And where did he live? In the next house? In the jam jars in the shed? Maybe God was the ditch water slowly edging towards the river?

"Banish yourself to a pink wasteland, God," he ordered.

There was a moment of darkness then. It was like Brant had closed his eyes for a second. Then he was seeing something in old man Parker's field.

Parker's field was on the other side of the ditch. Nobody was allowed there and Parker was never seen in it. Brant only ever saw Parker in the village buying food. Now there was something in that forbidden field of long yellow grass. It was red and blue and yellow. A toy? Brant strained his eyes to see. He was supposed to wear glasses but refused to. In fact he had placed his glasses on a scarecrow years ago. Funny, but the scarecrow was never to be seen again. He still dreamt about it walking through straw.

"Black straw!"

The thing in Parker's field was moving. It was coming closer. Brant's mind toppled when he saw what it was. It couldn't be. It was! It was a toy train. It didn't look like the drabby painted models that his grandfather had shown him once. They were realistic. This was more like a child's toy. The colours were bright and magical. Brant peered closer, pushing his face between stiff twigs. The train was worming closer to the very edge of the field on tracks he could not see. Parker must have built it all. He was probably in his house controlling the train. Mad man!

"Maddy mad man."

Brant wished he could get into the field and play with the toy. But nobody would dare. Parker kept dogs and owned a gun. At school they all talked about the kids who went missing near his house. He took you inside his home and poisoned you with drugged buns. Then he ate you or fed you to his dogs, depending on who was telling the story. Sometimes Parker was seen wearing the clothes of the kids in the village. Brant wondered if the train was supposed to lure him into the field so Parker could set his dogs on him.

The train was on the very edge of the long grass now. If it went any further it would fall into the ditch. Maybe it was meant to? Maybe it would float like a boat? Maybe it would float out to sea?

The train turned as Brant was fantasising. He could see people now. Toy people surely. They were riding the train. They were amazingly detailed. They had real hair! He could see it blowing slightly in the breeze. And all their faces were turned to look at him.

Brant felt his mind turning inside out. He watched the train turn left and then it turned again, back into the long grass and away.

"Barrage!"

Brant went back into the shed and sat in the armchair. His head was swimming now. He felt sleepy. The jam jars did that to you. He closed his eyes and...

The boy was walking down the road, fields and hedgerows on either side of him. Then a house came into view. The boy strolled up to it and saw the man. Parker. Parker had a plate of buns with white icing sugar on them. The boy smiled at Parker. Parker smiled back and pointed at the buns.

"Wooooouuuuld yoooooou liiiiiiike ooooooooone?"

The boy raced up to Parker and took one of the buns. He bit it. Parker smiled some more and opened the door of his home.

"Wooooould youuuuuuuuu liiiiiiiike some teeeeeeeea?"

The boy nodded and they both went inside. The boy had already eaten half of the bun. Parker showed him into the living room. The walls were covered in weird brown stains. The boy sat in an armchair and dropped the rest of his bun on the threadbare carpet.

Parker laughed and put the plate of buns on a table that seemed to made from branches. He then pulled a magician's wand from his trouser pocket and touched the end of it on the sleeping boy's head. The boy began to shrink, clothes and all, until he was barely a few inches in size. Parker picked up the tiny drugged boy and took him into the back yard. There was a large kennel and inside it a pair of glowing red eyes. There were chickens in a pen and there sat on a curve of tracks was the train. Parker slotted the sleeping boy into a carriage of the train and quickly picked up a black square device with a long wire coming from it. He fiddled with a knob on the device and the train began to move. It trundled into the long yellow grass.

Brant woke up and felt his head spinning. The shed was spinning too.

Blood Squirt

Black mirrors travelling at the speed of light collide with lumps of pink skin in the ovoid substructure. Hair like steel wire sprouts from the pink skin and grow like trees in a millisecond. Spoons in space fire light beams into black images like pain that threatens high jaundice. Blue turnips speak of heavy flasks and begin to dance in circles towards gummy lips of liquid shadow. And spinning discs of light migrate towards entropy and begin to blame spires of turquoise and amber that count the bodies of local wars and fend off blight from rabbit glove living.

Sputnik alien stalag gulag transient high lights balcony building smile paste fruit drum puzzle prism spank. Past velocity cage jinx sterility drainage jelly junk pasture flank. Histrionics are blasted by elephant men in purple corduroy jumpsuits armed with acid guns and feather guzzlers. Punishment fortunes lift us to gooey sticky lights and staff shortages stink in grey waters that thrive in hell world #2. Black and white bread animals prune the sticks of bone to bend the solar thighs.

Still Alive

Dr Formby squirms in his seat. His wife, Sarah, switches on the TV with a remote control. She has a black wire sprouting from her head that connects to a watercolour on the wall. The picture is of an alien landscape. Dr Formby watches TV. Black figures fight with white figures on the screen. Dr Formby screams. His wife begins to shake. A door opens and a man in green clothes and a yellow helmet drags a purple chair into the room. Dr Formby stands up and punches the air. The air rips open in dark blue lightning. Sarah stands up and the black wire leading from her head snaps. She falls over on the floor and vanishes. The man in green drags the chair, which is now blue, through

another door. Dr Formby switches the tv off with the remote. Sarah reappears in her chair, her head again connected to the painting with a black wire.

Flight Beacon Hugs Vast Aprons That Fluctuate In A Black Wind

The man grabs the flaps of his chest wound with both hands and tears them apart revealing black feathers.

Livid Junk

Trink knocks on the red and green door with his pink fist. Somewhere in his mind a gypsy caravan explodes expelling black ghosts; somewhere in the mind of one of those ghosts Trink knocks on a red and green door with his pink fist.

The door opens revealing a white ghost. Somewhere in the mind of the white ghost a six foot man with pink fists is standing outside her door.

"Can I help you?" she asks.

"Yes, I'm looking for a mister Frox."

"I know no mister Frox."

"I think you once did," Trink insists; somewhere in his mind is a red thing with three wheels and frost covered antlers trundling back and forth in a yellow room.

"Yes...yes...yes..." the white ghost says, her white hands fondling the white rosary beads around her neck.

"I believe he's in your mind,"Trink informs her, and smiles revealing sharp black teeth.

"The clergy have demonised mister Frox, I now recall."

"And now he lives in your mind to protect himself from sick prayers and vile ceremonies."

"But you have knocked on the wrong door, you should have knocked on the back door."

"Why is that?"

"The back door gives access to my subconscious."

Somewhere in Trink's mind a black balloon bursts revealing a floating white cube.

Snip Snip

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People begin to appear from the doors in the station. They are wearing clown colours and are dancing.

Banquet of Flesh

A yellow brain throbs in the black room. An orange machine gun floats outside. Nemb reads a newspaper in a pink waiting room. The newspaper is glowing green and the words "jackal wins the war" stand out. Nemb stands up, dropping the newspaper to the floor. He reaches into his coat pocket and pulls out a small red gun. There are other people in the waiting room. They are all purple and wear purple clothes. None of them react to the sight of the gun. Nemb floats into the air and becomes a white orb. The white orb floats towards a corridor. Black sparks fire from its surface.

In a small room Jane is being given an injection by a man who looks like a walrus. He has a walrus mustache and a fat belly. He is bald except for random black hairs that stand out like thin spikes.

In another room Hilary is drinking out of a small plastic cup. The liquid is pink and smells of fish. A nurse with a lumpy green face is watching Hilary.

She has black hands and white wrists.

Nemb becomes a man again, and puts away his gun. He is standing outside a door. He opens the door to a black room where a yellow brain throbs. Nemb enters the room and walks towards the brain. He touches the sticky surface of the brain with his finger. Instantly the brain begins to grow. It fills the room and becomes transparent. It grows still and soon is filling the corridor and the rooms with a yellow haze.

Meanwhile in a tall thin house a dozen miles away a skinny boy with a silver spring growing out of the top of his bald head is watching TV. On the TV screen is Nemb fighting a yellow mist. The mist is in his head speaking to him. The boy switches the channel with his remote.

Spatial Lense Hive

Prink looks at his watch. The watch looks back with a single blinking eye. A bus slides by containing pink wool. Prink is going to the comic book shop. Black thoughts spill from his mind like dark toy soldiers crushed in a vice. The eyes of the toy soldiers are blue dots that glow like bulbs. Deep inside the minds of the soldiers a war is being fought. It is a war between boredom and excitement.

Prink has on a green suit the colour of new grass. Prink has had so many dreams of being a pirate that he believes he was one in a previous life. He is looking for a comic book about pirates but has never found one. Sometimes he thinks he spies one in a charity shop but it is just an illusion.

Prink crosses the road towards a tree. The tree has orange leaves. It reminds Prink of the time he used to dance in nightclubs wearing a brick orange shirt. Those times are gone but Prink does not feel sad about it. Prink does not feel sad about anything in the past. He had an operation when he was a foetus that removed those particular feelings. But he does feel particulary sad about the future.

A woman pushing a pram walks past Prink. Prink gets a glance of something with too many arms and legs in the pram. He hears a wet gurgling sound like something under water.

Prink's mind turns into a beehive swarming with bees. The bees are black. The bees sting Prink's brain. They want to gain access to the real world so they can poison it with their grey honey. The honey turns people into dreams. The bees are dreams too.

Prink has arrived at the comic book shop. He pushes the door and sniffs the air. Incense wafts up his nose as usual. The owner of the shop is a hippy who travelled forwards in time to sell comics. At least that is what Prink has been told by a voice in his head when he was meditating. He meditates a lot. He has fought wars in higher dimensions while in a trance. He has no idea who he battled but they were dark purple and had arms covered in diamonds.

Prink began to stalk the aisles of the shop in search of pirate comics.

Benign Rumour

Jisp Smashes the bulb on the ground sending glittering splinters in all directions. Jisp watches the shards until they are still and counts them. He looks around him for something else to break.

Jisp is on his motorbike. Zombie trees reach for him but just miss. He is too fast and wise. Something black forms in the sky that looks like a dog. The dog slowly solidifies and sinks to the ground ahead of Jisp. Jisp watches the dog, which is as big as a man, as he rides towards it.

Then Jisp is at home watching TV. A large black dog is herding sheep on the screen.

"Why am I watching this rubbish?" Jisp wonders and reaches for the remote. He changes channel. Now yellow people with blue hair are fighting small red

bulls in a white room. Jisp falls asleep watching the TV. In his dreams he is scrunching up a ball of purple paper until his hands started to bleed. His blood is black.

Jisp is working in a charity shop. It's his job to sniff the clothes to see if they need washing. He picks up a strange knitted brown garment. It has arms and legs and a hood.

Jisp is in the changing room. He is putting on the knitted brown garment. It feels good. He slips his arms in and then pulls up the hood. It is more than a hood because it covers his face. He can see through the knitted woolen mesh. He feels fantastic.

Jisp cavorts around the charity shop in the brown knitted garment. An old woman looks at him. She has a finger growing out of her face just below the left eye. She is wearing an old coat with sequins dotted here and there. Jisp leaps around her.

Jisp is crawling into a hole in the ground. He found a map showing the hole and he wondered what was down there.

Dilly Dally

Blaff was laughing. He was laughing at the houses and the cars and the traffic island. Something black lived in the bushes of the traffic island. Blaff had been told by a fortune teller that he would one day do battle with a black thing. Maybe it would be the black thing on the traffic island. But he had once seen a black thing rushing up the fire escape of an apartment block. Maybe that was his foe.

Blaff found himself not laughing anymore. So he started laughing again.

Later, Blaff was in the wasteland. The wasteland had once been a power station. The station was now the odd wall and pile of rubble but the power

was still there. But only Blaff could access it. He was born during an eclipse, which gave him gifts that nobody else had.

Blaff felt the buzz of the power and moved to where it was most powerful, next to a giant curved pipe sticking out of the ground. He felt his black hair standing on end. The power was filling his body like a gushing tap filling a watering can.

Then it was night. Time moved on when you were accessing power. Blaff stalked home like a panther through streets that echoed with emptiness. Street lights lit up the pavement with discs of yellow. Alleyways contained black holes and cats. Barbed wire glittered on brick walls too high to climb. Blaff laughed at a parked car. It looked so demented. He could imagine the adventures it had seen in its days.

Later Blaff woke up from a dream. He had been dreaming about a man with a fishing rod. On the hook of the rod was a large hand. The man had been swishing the hand around hitting his bedroom window.

Blaff screamed as he ate his breakfast. Blaff cried as he washed his face in the sink. He kept being haunted by the notion that he had more than one face and that the other faces were behind his real one if only he could peel it off like sellotape.

As he dressed for his daily walk Blaff felt the power blasting in his hands. He wondered what would happen if he failed to use it. Would he transform? Into what?

Blaff laughed at the man washing the windows of a van. The man laughed back. He had a beard made from twigs and a nose shaped like an ear. Blaff felt the power trying to release itself. It wanted to change the van man.

"Not yet!" Blaff insisted. He walked towards the statue gardens. Here were marble effigies of lovers hugging each other. Here were still life representations of people doing mundane things. One statue was frying an egg in a frying pan. And there was someone sat on a toilet.

Blaff wept at it all. He didn't know why. The power inside him suddenly leapt

from his hands and struck the statue of the figure on the toilet.

The statue stood up and began to wipe its bottom.

The Secret Factory

Glinz had been born during the war between the feathered people and the smooth people. He could play the piano pretty good and could drink alcohol all day and never get drunk. His mother had worried about him as a child because he would not cry even when pinched. Nowadays he cried all the time. Anything could set him off: birds flying high above, women walking past him in the street, the taste of blood.

Glinz worked at the secret factory.

The factory looked like a block of flats but the flats were a front. There were flats but the rooms were populated by mannequins. If you saw the flats from another building they would appear real. The mannequins were moved around once a week to maintain the illusion. But behind the fake flats the factory produced its wares unseen by anyone who did not work at the factory.

Glinz liked to work at the factory. His job was easy. He checked curvy yellow pipes for imperfections. Sometimes they were not curvy enough. Sometimes they were not yellow enough. Mostly they were okay. Maybe one in a thousand was not perfect and those he took from the conveyor belt he put into a large box on wheels that would be pushed away into the depths of the factory.

Glinz was not allowed to see any part of the factory other than where he worked. He even had to eat his lunch at the side of the conveyor belt. He had never spoken to any of the other workers. They were not permitted to.

One day, while sitting on the toilet, he had been passed a piece of paper by a gloved hand under the stall. He knew it was wrong to take that piece of paper

but still he did it. He had always been curious. If the people who ran the factory knew about him being so curious he would probably have lost his job there. Curious people were a danger to the working of the factory. It thrived on secrecy.

But Glinz took the piece of paper and unwrapped it. There were words written on it. "No on leaves the factory alive" it read. Glinz understood what the message was talking about instantly. How could the secrecy of the factory be kept if people retired? It couldn't. The people who ran the factory could not rely on the secrecy of its workers.

Glinz put the piece of paper in his pocket and finished using the toilet. He then returned to the conveyor belt and continued his work. Curly yellow pipes filed down the conveyor, all of them perfect. It took two days for a bad pipe to appear. It was not curly enough. Glinz allowed it to continue down the conveyor belt along with the perfect pipes. It was a small act but it was all he could think to do.

Peurile and Awesome

Plagg felt the explosion but did not hear or see it. He had an idea what the explosion meant: the sea was at war with them again. The sea had been warring with them for decades. It had murdered millions of the rubber people. Plagg was one of the rubber people.

Plagg had not started out as a rubber person. He had been born solid but at the time of his tenth birthday had begun to soften until he had become a rubber person. His family were all solid people so it came as a bit of a shock to them. They kept his rubber body secret from the elite in case it meant trouble. No doubt scientists would be rather suspicious of Plagg and his new rubber body and all manner of tests would be implemented to discover why he had become a rubber person.

The sea hated rubber people. It had started a war with them before Plagg had

been born. It sent starfish to assassinate them. Sometimes it flooded entire villages just to get at one rubber person. The solid people did not know what to do about it. They contemplated segregating the rubber people so that the sea could kill them off. But the elite politicians decided against it. They were not all bad.

But now the sea had found Plagg. They had sent their agents to bomb him with subtle explosions. So Plagg ran away. He ran as far away from the sea as he could. Which wasn't easy as he lived on an island, albeit a large island. He did not want to leave his city. He had lived there all his life and all his family lived there. But his life was at stake. He found a small village high up in the hills. It was easy to find a place to live. But after a week something strange happened. He was walking in the hills, looking for mushrooms to eat, when he saw something like a piece of white paper flying towards him. It wasn't even windy so he wondered what was forcing it across the hills. Soon it crashed into his legs and he saw what it was. It was not a piece of paper. It was a section of white plastic. It wrapped around his legs and threatened to topple him. Somehow it was gripping onto him. He tried to peel it off but it seemed glued to his legs. He got a good look at it and recognised it. It was a scale model of his city, the city he had left behind. He could see streets and roads that he knew. And there was his house, where his family lived. The floppy white plastic model could not have been sent by the sea, could it?

Black Magic Mask

Joot pushed his metal hand into the yellow pile of goo.

Joot worked at a shop that sold bottles of pig blood. Pig blood was useful to sorcerers in their rituals. He had a girlfriend called Numa that used it to conjure lost gods. The gods brought her all manner of shoes and gloves, some with special abilities. Some of them gave her power over worms. She had a pair of purple mittens that allowed her to chat with people over long distances. She had spooked her friends like that many times.

Joot pulled apart the yellow goo.

Joot had a cousin who lived in the dead body of a whale. He had treated the flesh with a special varnish that preserved it. He had built walls and floors in the whale and slept in the head of the whale. He claimed that when he was asleep he had dreams about the sea. Joot had stayed in the whale himself but had only dreamt about sausages.

Joot felt around in the yellow goo and found something solid. He pulled it out and tried to wipe away the goo. He put it under a tap and washed away the yellow substance.

The Strain

There are twenty fires burning in the room. Lord Hebb likes a warm room. Pictures of fires adorn the walls. Statues of flames sit on sideboards. In the centre of the room is a black form. It looks like a figure swathed in a black sheet, twisted by anguish. Lord Hebb likes to look at it and imagine it is made from charcoal. It is in fact carved from stone.

The door to the fire room opens and Lord Hebb's wife enters. She is wearing a pale blue dress and has white hair.

"Do you think much?" She asked.

"Do I think much?"

"Do you think much?"

The fires burned and the statue writhed as if tormented by the flames. Lord Hebb stood up and walked to one of the fireplaces. He was wearing a tweed suit the colour of oatmeal.

"I don't think much," he said.

"Then you will never put out the fires, " Lady Hebb told him as she walked into the room, wringing her hands. "You will never be free."

Lady Hebb approached the black statue and laid her right hand on it.

"It is warm," she proclaimed. She touched another part of the statue. "It is cold," she said.

Lord Hebb screamed. The sound was like a window smashing. He knelt by the fire and held out a hand.

"Must I touch the flames?" He asked. "Must I set myself on fire?"

Lady Hebb turned to him.

"Yes," she said. "You must set yourself on fire."

People Trying To Admit They Are Wrong About A Fish

The naked man left the shop and stared at the ground. Someone had dropped some chewing gum and it had been flattened into a white mishapen coin. For a second he thought it was a coin. You would never think the reverse, he told himself. You would never think a coin was a discarded piece of chewing gum.

The naked man walked on. He had to buy a watch. But where could he purchase one? He could try the jewellers on the other side of town.

A bus screeched and there was a loud bang like a tin drum being beaten by a giant. There had been a crash, the naked man realised, his mind spinning. A purple car had been struck from behind and green smoke issued from its wound. The naked man began to think about food. He had not eaten in twelve days. The thought of food was alien to him. Maybe someone had died in the crash. Maybe somebody was dying and he could help.

People were already moving around the crashed car. The driver of the bus had left his vehicle and was running to see if there was anything he could do. Maybe he felt responsible. He shouldn't, the naked man told himself. The crash had been caused by the evil one. The evil one who lurked in the invisible realm and caused chaos in the visible.

The naked man walked towards the crash, the road wet. Maybe the driver of the crash would need first aid. The naked man had read a book about first aid and felt confident that he knew what to do.

Before he reached the crash he knew that the driver of the car would have a yellow face, like marzipan. The naked man also knew that the driver would be bleeding black blood from his nose. His nose would be pointy like a finger. His hair would be like a scrubbing brush.

When the naked man had pushed past the curious crowd he saw that the driver was in fact grey skinned and had no nose except for a couple of holes. His hair was blond and luxurious.

"Make way!" The naked man commanded.

The evil one was watching him. He knew why he was naked. He knew everything.

The naked man leant in through the open window of the crashed purple car and kissed the grey face of the driver. The naked man fled the scene, crying golden tears from his naked eyes.

Dark Matter Exploding In a China Cup

(The red wheel is floating in darkness)

Blick had green hair and wore a black leather jacket and yellow trousers that were way too big for him. On his feet he wore red plimsolls. Blick was smoking a pipe stuffed with a purple substance. He was sat in a tatty orange

armchair surrounded by paintings that he had created himself. He was waiting for his muse to kick in. He had a fresh canvas to fill and paints aching to be smeared into life. His paintings were abstract and dripped with energy. They looked blurred. Deformed.

(The red wheel began to spin in the darkness)

Blick smoked more of his pipe and closed his eyes. His girlfriend was visting friends on the other side of the city. Blick did not like her friends much. They had shown interest in one of his paintings but had failed to buy it. They also never laughed at his jokes. They were squares in a world without definite shape. Blick was shapeless.

(The red wheel began to spin faster)

Blick felt his mind widen. This was the first sign. The muse was waiting for him. He could feel his brain merging with the rest of the room and beyond. He could sense stories being written in nearby rooms. He was next door, he was in the flats above. His mind could not penetrate the sky yet. He had penetrated the sky many times thanks to the purple substance. He had found the purple substance in a phone booth last year. A pound of it. He had used half of it. He hadn't been a painter back then. Smoking the substance -which he had been dared to do by his best mate-had filled him with ideas for paintings. He could only paint under the influence of the substance.

(The red wheel is spinning so fast that it appears to be running backwards)

Blick coughed. The substance had that effect. Whatever it was it was potent but harsh. His girlfriend didn't like to be around when he smoked it, but she missed seeing him paint. Blick's mind was in the next street and he could just make out a dark figure in the distance. The figure moved like lightning towards him.

Blick opened his eyes and screamed. The face he had seen was the worst thing he had ever seen. It was so ugly that it wasn't even a face. Blick put his pipe down and stared at the blank canvas. There was a knocking sound somewhere. It took half a minute for him to realise it was his front door. No, it was the door to his living room. Someone was in the hallway. Blick's mind

filled with black ink and his heart began to beat loud enough for him to measure. He closed his eyes and saw the face. He opened them and still saw the face.

(The red wheel stops spinning and begins to drip blood into the darkness)

We Don't Stand A Chance

(Black tubes gleam in the midnight grey. Obsidian machines glitter and charge. Ebony men race through shadows. Ghosts in glass tubes barely light the gloom of massive tunnels where wet things writhe. The planet has no sun and relies on suffering to see how things really are.)

Wandy takes a knife and scoops some butter from the jar. She smears the butter onto the slice of bread in her hand. She repeats this ritual until all the slices of bread are buttered. Now she takes the knife AND STABS THE SLICES OF BREAD. STABS AND STABS UNTIL THERE IS NOTHING BUT SHARDS AND CRUMBS OF BREAD AND BUTTER.

"Oh why could that not be flesh and blood?" She says to herself. Her mind is a black brain and always has been. She just hadn't seen it until now.

Wandy sways. Her mind is a spinning lump of coal that has no ability to burn. She is sterile from toe to top. BLACK SNAKES ARE SQUIRMING IN HER GUTS. BLACK BLACK BLACK BLACK IS BEFORE HER MIND'S EYE. NOTHING AWAITS HER IN THE ABYSS.

Wandy checks the oven. The jam pies look cooked. She turns off the oven and puts on her oven mitts. She opens the oven and takes out the tray of hot pies. She places the tray of pies on the kitchen table AND SPITS OVER THEM. If only she had some poison or broken glass. Her guests at the party would love to eat her jam pies and if they contained razor blades then they would enjoy them in another way. What a joke to play on pleasent people.

Wandy takes a deep breath. Just outside her field of vision is a black imp with a face like an owl and long fingered hands like worms wiggling as if caught on hooks.

Deep within Wandy a light is shining in the darkness. It is like a candle in a well about to burn out.

"Maybe I should make some more buns, "she says.

High Places

The embassy is on a hill. A winding road leads to it. It is always night there.

Jopp is walking in the midnight country roads. Hairy cars pass him like wide eyed beasts. A wheeled snake is parked in a layby. Black stars shine in a black sky. The forty moons light up the trees. Fireworks, so distant they are silent, scar the night.

Jopp is wearing ten rings - one on each digit. Each ring has a story. Each story has a victim. Jopp is a nightmare and a dream. Jopp has twenty four brothers, all of them dead. They guard his mind from the attacks of his dirty genomes.

Yellow shadows dance by a barn. The barn is the home of a rotting corpse. The flesh of the corpse glows green. Once a week the corpse rises and feeds on the innocent. The embassy put the corpse there but they did not kill him. The soul of the corpse resides in the bowels of the embassy. It acts as a messenger for the ambassador. It spies on heavenly cities and reports back.

Jopp meets a stranger on his walk. A woman wearing a full body stocking the colour of a sunset. Jopp ignores her words which issue like a deflating balloon. He cannot understand her nor does he want to. She vanishes into the night. But she was a sign from heaven.

Jopp is close to the embassy. The ambassador knows. Hags wait for Jopp.

Hags with sticks for arms and dripping green faces. The hags throw custard pies at effigies of the silent ones. The silent ones are from heaven. They spy on the embassy and pry in its affairs.

Jopp sees the embassy in dreams when he is awake. Dreams like this do not wait for night to fall. He has seen the people who guard the embassy. The guards drive small three wheeled cars painted red. Jopp knows how to get past the guards.

Jopp has arrived at the front gate of the embassy. It is not locked. It is part of the belief system of the ambassador that gates and doors should not be locked. All are welcome at the embassy.

Jopp walks up the drive to the embassy and ducks into the bushes. He pushes through into a clearing and walks in a crouch until he reaches a statue of a faceless woman holding a vase. Just like in his dreams. The guards did not patrol this area as much as the rest. Jopp waited and watched. No one passed by in ten minutes. Then a window lit up and a face appeared. A hand waved to him. The window opened and a beatiful woman leaned out.

"Welcome back ambassador, " the woman said.

Eating Purple Smoke With Yellow Teeth

Cheen pulls off his mask and lets it fall to the floor. No longer connected to Cheen's auric field it begins to shrivel up and soon is no more than a pile of ashes. Cheen walks through the house. His footsteps echo. The house is empty of people and furniture. There is a strange feeling to the house that Cheen does not recognise. It is a new feeling to Cheen. He leaves the house and sees a gang of clowns leaning on a white panel truck. They are wearing make up and not masks. Cheen takes out his pistol and fires upon the clowns. The bullets all miss. The clowns do not react. They are not watching him. They are staring at each other. Cheen walks towards the clowns. There are five of them. They still do not look at him or move in any way. Cheen puts

his gun away and touches one of the clowns on the shoulder. The clown is solid yet begins to rise into the air. It levitates up and up until it is caught in a breeze and begins to float away. Cheen touches all of the clowns and they all float into the air and sail away across the rooftops.

Cheen drives home. His flat is silent when he unlocks the door, yet he feels something; the flat feels the same way as the house he searched. He pulls off his mask and it shrinks into a pink petal and becomes ashes. Cheen searches his flat, looking under books and under the bed. Under the bed he finds a black stone that fits into his hand. It has a curious shape to it. He has seen the shape before but cannot recall where or when.

Cheen watches TV and peels off his mask. He drops it to the floor where it becomes a tiny pink coin and vanishes into ashes. Green men are walking on his TV screen. They are walking to a far away building where smoke is issuing. Eventually they reach it. The smoke is purple. They begin to eat the purple smoke with their yellow teeth. Cheen peels off his mask and holds it in his hand. He examines the mask, wondering who he is now. Each mask comes with a distinct personality. He searches his mind for that new personality. He likes ice cream and pizza. Cheen drops the mask and examines his mind again. Now he likes pasta and cheesecake. Cheen pulls out his gun. He has shot and killed so many criminals that he can no longer recall how many. Forty or fifty? Maybe more.

Cheen goes to bed. He enters the dark places in his mind. The empty buildings. The streets devoid of people. Nobody to arrest. Nobody to shoot. Then he begins to dream. Clowns are commiting crimes. They are kidnapping people and taking them to a closed down funfair. The people they kidnap are forced to go on the rides. Dozens of them are tied up in the rides as they go around and around getting faster. Things begin to manifest in the air around the rides. They look like red demons with horns and wings. They have curly tails like pigs. The clowns beckon them down with their large white gloved hands. The demons fly down and the clowns trap them in massive glass jars with screw top lids. Soon they have a dozen demons.

Cheen wakes up and looks at the black stone on the night stand. It does not look the same shape as when he found it. Deep down in his mind he knows it will give him immense power. He does not know how it will give him

immense power. Cheen touches it and it rocks gently. Cheen goes back to sleep where he dreams about the stone.

Later Cheen drives through the city. It is raining. A black dog chases a white cat. A black cat runs from a white dog. People melt in the downpour. Cheen puts on some music. It is wild and meaningless jazz. The brass screams as the rain dissolves the buildings. Cheen pulls off his mask and tosses it onto the seat next to him. It wrinkles up into an old man's face and becomes ash. Cheen parks his car and gets out. He runs to a cafe that sells great tuna sandwiches. The cafe is full of clowns. They all stop eating and drinking and turn to Cheen. Cheen takes out his gun and fires a few shots. The bullets seem to vanish in mid air. Cheen puts his gun away and touches one of the clowns on the arm.

"Hey!" Cries the clown.

The clown opens his white gloved hand and shows Cheen a black stone.

Give Or Take An Inch

Green junk writhes on Gugg's lap. Shapes manifest and dissolve: tin cans, banana peel, screwed up newspapers, broken bottles. The junk seems to be alive. Gugg picks up a green fag packet from the mess. It has a green string of goo connecting it to the rest of the rubbish. He tries to part the fag packet from the ever changing mush but the link is strong and slightly elasticated. He drops the cigarette packet and it falls back into the green junk to become an amorphous thing before disappearing into the mush.

Gugg stands up and the green junk drops to the floor. Gugg steps on the thing and the green rubbish parts and becomes two piles of shifting rubbish. When Gugg lifts his foot he sees several links between the two piles of confusion. Slowly the two masses slide back together.

Beneath You

There are cracks between the floorboards of the cafe, wide enough to lose a large coin down, sideways on. They are a constant wonder to me, and I always spend a few minutes each day, sipping hot sweet tea and mopping up egg yolk with a chunk of bread, watching the lights flash through the gaps...

...and hearing the screams of joy as the ghost trains rattle beneath.

Only if you get down on hands and knees will you catch a glimpse of a terrified face, a grasping hand. But that would be rude, to steal terror and enthralment from someone else's ticket, so to speak. I was brought up to respect things like that, as no doubt you were. Another man's fear is his own business. If you are lucky, as my fellow cafe friends and I are, you may find a place such as this, where the floorboards don't meet or the walls are too thin.

Then, and only then, is it correct to share another person's yells of terror, as they plummet from some skeleton infested precipice, into God knows what kind of blackness.

Not that my envy is a dark one. They deserve their particular mode of transport, according to the sum of their worldy goods. I myself, as you know, am merely a retired librarian with a pittance of a pension to get by on. I can just about afford a meal at the cafe every day, and a few hours of TV before I go to bed. Nope, no subterranean ghost rides for me, I'm sorry to say. No dangling, heavy cobwebs, no coffins expelling their inhabitants. Oh well, eh?

At least I have my bus pass.

It's a fair old distance away is my home by the industrial lake. I used to walk it in half an hour, when I was a young man, free of school and my family. Savouring the empty stinking shells of houses and the dark trickling ditches breaking through scraggy gardens. Walking the streets gave you a taste for better things. I was aware even as a tiny child, wandering alone through litter clad alleyways and crossing rusting walkways, that something bigger was going on, somewhere else. Unseen.

Aye, that was when I was young and fit. Can't expect to stay young and fit for ever, can you? And besides, the buses, although not in the same league as the ghost trains, do at least attempt to stir up a bit of fun for us. A sudden detour past the asylum on dark winter's nights. The occasional lump of rotting meat left inside a flat cap or stuck to a seat. One day the driver let on a gang of youths dressed as ghosts and they performed all manner of strange deeds under their sheets. It's not much, but it helps.

It's very much appreciated.

For some of us, though, it's just not enough. Not all the time. Some just can't take not knowing, you see? They have to know, even if it means breaking into the train tunnels and...well, the rest is hearsay. There's always someone with a story to tell. People cut down by the speeding trains, trains full of screaming faces. Others captured by the ones who run the trains...and provide the entertainment. All rumours, you have to understand. No real evidence.

Those that listen to rumour tend to fair better, and go to live in the old factories, swimming about in brown pools, running naked through dark corridors, in the hope that enthralment shall fill their hearts and then they shall have their own eternal ghost train. I can see them during the day, dressed as God knows what, standing about waiting for night. And at night I can only hear them, their echoing screams as they search through darkness for something that will always elude them.

I know, because I've searched too.

Sometimes, when I'm at peace, sat in the cafe, mopping up egg yolk with a chunk of bread, I'm almost convinced that my search has come to an end.

And then the trains come rushing beneath.

<u>Black Responses To A Black Response</u>

The hunter hugs his teddy bear. The hunter is crying.

Black teeth fall out of the teddy bear's mouth. Black snakes writhe on the floor around the feet of the hunter.

Later the hunter lies on his bed. Black birds are perched on the head board. They clean their wings with their dark beaks. The hunter reaches into his trouser pocket and produces a penny whistle. He puts the whistle to his lips and blows. No sound comes out of the thin silver instrument.

The hunter goes hunting with his crossbow. He finds no deer in the attic. No rabbits in the living room. There is a bear in the bedroom, but at the last moment he realises it's his teddy bear. Black flies swarm him when he stalks into the spare room. There always was something odd about that room. He used to use it as an office where he planned to write a book. But he could never concentrate. The room seemed to call to him, or a part of his mind that he could usually access. It wanted to absorb him and his negativity. No doubt some creature lurked there that he could not hunt. Some ancient horror that had been there since the beginning of time itself, maybe before. It probably fancied the hunter and wanted his dark soul. He would succumb to its wishes.

The hunter took his crossbow back to the bedroom. He lay on the bed and the teddy bear lolled over him spilling black maggots over his neck. The hunter waited for the maggots to vanish before he could sleep.

In his dreams he was wearing a pink frilly apron and serving tea for a couple of old ladies wearing nothing but bikinis. He poured tea into their dainty china cups and sliced cake with a large silver knife which he apportioned to the ladies on delicate little plates.

Then he dreamt that he was being hunted by the old ladies. They were armed with bows and arrows and were wearing horrible rubber masks. They grunted like pigs as they chased him from bush to half demolished wall to bush to half demolished wall. They finally caught him behind a pile of purple bricks and fired their arrows into him. They pierced his chest where black blood flowers spread across his khaki shirt. His screams were shrill and seemed to

be coming from a derelict gazebo far away from the hunter. The screams echoed against the concave sides of ancient cooling towers to bounce into short rows of houses. The people who lived in those small homes opened their doors to savour the screams. They fed off pain and grew fat and muscular the more they absorbed.

Glower Power And Putty Smell Death

Grey houses sat next to the electricity substation. Black and red grass grew in hairy tufts around the buzzing device. A strong fence with spikes surrounded the substation yet that only kept the residents of the grey houses out. Things could still escape the substation.

Yomas lived at number six. He was tall and thin and dressed in black. He had been on permanent holiday ever since the shoe factory had vanished. His holiday pay kept coming through the letter box every week. Maybe the shoe factory still existed in some frozen dimension. Maybe it had never existed at all. Maybe Yomas wasn't real either. He wondered about reality all the time, what with the manifestations from the substation. Long thin yellow things were often seen from his windows. They looked like ribcages covered in tight fabric or skin. But other things appeared: large purple spheres with tiny black legs, green masks that floated on the breeze, orange cars that crept along the road with no one driving.

Yomas was determined to get to the bottom of it all. It was all the fault of the electricity substation.

If only he could be sure that he wasn't the only one to see the entities. But talking to his neighbours was difficult. He knocked at their doors and buzzed their doorbells but nobody would come to his call. He knew they were in because he could see their curtains twitching. Once he stood outside number twelve and watched the upstairs curtain spasming for half an hour. Had they rigged it to do that with some machine? Had the houses become possessed by the things that spilled from the substation? Maybe there were no neighbours

anymore. Maybe he was the last one to live there. Should he move out as well? He couldn't recall a time when he didn't live at number six. How could he move out now? And to where?

He wasn't going to put up with this any longer. But what could he do? He could write a letter to the council, maybe? He searched his telephone book for the number of the council, but someone had messed with it. All the numbers seemed randomly alloted. And they repeated. He found his own number in five different places, under different names. How could anyone call him if his number was shared with five other people? But then why had he not had one wrong call in years? Maybe his phone wasn't even working. They probably didn't want him to be able to call for help. It occured to him in a flash that calling the council was a waste of time: they had put the substation there in the first place. It wasn't malfunctioning at all. It was doing exactly what was expected of it.

Yomas tried to sleep but there was a buzzing sound in his ears, he suspected that it was in his mind. They were growing in power. So far their monsters had been prevented from entering his home, but now they had found a way into his brain. He dressed and went outside. He walked to the súbstation, noticing all the curtains in the houses twitching. Of course, the monsters lived there now and they wanted his home too. It was part of a slow invasion. House by house they were driving the residents mad or killing them. The thought made his mind inflate with panic. Black things moved in the night sky blotting out the moon and stars for a moment as they flew over his head. Yomas felt vulnerable but determined. He grabbed the gate of the substation, the buzzing in his head so loud he couldn't hear anything else. The gate was not locked. It swung open. He walked in. He felt the warmth of the coils. His skin prickled. Something round with spikes was leant on the small brick structure in the centre of the substation. It stood up straight as he approached. Yomas was scared of the thing. The thing had legs and arms. It walked towards him.

"Yomas," it gargled.

"Yomas, " he gargled back.

Yomas woke up the next day and dressed before washing his face. His face bled as he scrubbed but it caused him no concern. The blood in the water looked beautiful. He dried his face on a towel leaving bloody marks. Maybe his face would always bleed like this. He was not concerned. He had too much to do today. He had to twitch his curtains until bed time.

Apparel Appropiate For Arson

Haunted spoons rattled in his mouth. The sky directly above him was black. His blood had turned red. His teeth were fingernails. Huge arms lay around his bed. Purple things dripped on the clothes horse. He had never seen the purple things before. They weren't clothes and nor were they towels, but something in between. The shrill sound of a rusty swing resounded through his house. His living room was full of people in yellow clothes. They all turned to look at him when he entered the room and opened their mouths wide revealing black teeth. The world outside his window was white like christmas, but it wasn't snow. The houses and gardens had been bleached by something. There was no sun in the sky but there was light. Everything was issuing light, it seemed.

His hair was painful. His skin was covered in green spots. His mind was empty of everything but fear. His brain was the computer that created all computers. Maths problems were written on the walls. He could not solve one of them because they all involved infinity. What was infinity divided by two? Infinity.

What was two times infinity? infinity.

His hands had seven fingers and two thumbs. His eyes could no longer see in the dark. His body was no longer fat.

Black shadow wizards battled in his bathroom. They roared like lions and smelled of sweets.

His name was no longer Juff. He was Tlongu The Unknowable Flang of The High And Mighty Fooshi.

Dirty Wind and Dirty Fire

Nuft had been having a great day: he had woken to a silent war. The bullets were fired by steam and the combatants screamed in mime. The war had been over before he had left the house and the only signs of combat were the odd burst balloon and streamers.

Nuft walked to town where he saw horses with horns being ridden by black shadows.

Spheres of gold floated above some of the houses. This was a sign of sickness or death.

Men in yellow overalls were tipping small flames out of metal cups. The flames danced across the pavements before vanishing.

Children so tiny they could fit in Nuft's pocket ran to and fro screaming like scared mice. They were being chased by a ball of white wool. Nuft watched them play for a while before the kids were run over by the wool ball. The ball changed colour and the fallen children vanished.

Someone had painted a wall white and somehow was projecting images onto it. Nuft stood and watched the art: images of suns exploding, wings flapping, houses collapsing, people melting.

Nuft came to a part of the town he did not recognise. The pavements were warped into small hills and valleys. Nuft had to climb and slide his way along. He came to a railing looking out over a deep river. Lying on the bed of the clear water was a gigantic lizard coloured like a rainbow. It did not move or produce bubbles.

Nuft followed the river until he came to a bridge. A house sat in the middle of

the bridge. It was tall and thin and slanted out across the river slightly. Nuft wondered who lived there. As he passed he peeked through windows hoping to catch a glance of the residents. All he saw was ancient looking furniture and swirls of dust.

(The eye watches Nuft. The eye can go anywhere. The eye is interested in Nuft. The eye is interested in what Nuft makes of this town and his own life)

Nuft crosses the bridge and finds himself at a crossroads. He takes a left turn and sees derelict houses. He likes derelict houses. They ooze history and leak stories from their faceless shapes. Nuft stood and absorbed the energies coming off the rubble. He didn't notice the man rising from behind an old bed. The man had spikey green hair and a safety pin through his nose. He wore a black leather waistcoat and tattered jeans.

"OI!" Cried the punk.

Nuft was alarmed. He saw the punk and his stomach knotted instantly. He had never seen anyone so ominous in the town. He simply did not belong, and he was walking towards Nuft.

"What are you doing?" The punk asked him.

"Well, I'm absorbing."

"Absorbing what?"

"Facts. This house used to belong to a family who..."

"Who were half ghosts, "the punk finished for him. He was close to Nuft now. The punk stank of glue.

"That's what I picked up,"Nuft said. "Did you know them?"

"Yeah, I knew 'em. I lived with 'em for a while. They've gone to live in another town now. Refused to take me along with 'em. Who are you then?"

"I'm not sure yet. I call myself Nuft. Well, that name..."

"Presented itself to you when you first woke 'ere." The punk wiped his nose with his hand.

Just then a siren broke the conversation. Nuft looked to his right and saw a dark blue van approaching.

"I'm not scared of them, " the punk said picking up a brick.

The van parked up close to Nuft and its rear door opened. Horrors jumped out: Three men in black uniforms, their heads covered in spherical orange masks like pumpkins.

"Reality control," one of them said loudly. "Got us here an anomaly."

The three men moved on the punk quickly and wrestled the brick out of his hand. They picked him up and took him to the rear of the van where they threw him in. One of the men walked towards Nuft and pointed a finger at him.

"You never saw him, right?"

"Oh, no. I never saw him," Nuft said shakily.

"You saw a fairy. What did you see?"

"A fairy. I saw a fairy."

"Good. Now do you want a lift home?" The man offered.

"No. I can find my own way back."

The men got back in the van and it drove away leaving Nuft alone.

It took him half an hour to get home. He thought about the fairy all the way.

(The eye was pleased).

Fate High Fate High

"I've saved fifty two people from drowning in fifty two seperate incidents and i'm sick of it."

"It's hard to swim when you are afraid of being wet."

Two men are chatting in a pub. One of them is thin and purple the other is fat and green.

"Black lasers were involved. They shatter the mind. There are fifty two elves involved also."

"Black lasers came from my eyes. The city is cursed by black lasers. The factories are not what they seem. They are the grey heart of the city. Nobody knows what they make. I've seen what they make and they should stop."

"They should make plastic rainbows and pink unicorns if they want to save the city from the black lasers and the black balloons that float down factory streets. I've seen the white doors opening and smelt the food."

"There's a hospital amongst the factories. I've been there. I'm sure of it. They treat the mentally ill with what they make in the factories. They make the mad people drink the brown water. Black lasers come from their instruments. They pop black balloons to cure the patients."

"I've seen the black pills they feed to the mentally ill in the hospital. They make the pills in the factories. I know. I've been there. I've bought black pills from ex-patients. Sanity is just a side effect. They make you able to read minds and make you into a zombie."

The two men leave the pub and enter the world of midnight streets. It is raining gently. Black balloons are sailing through the air above alleys crammed with trash.

"They make trash in the factories too. They spill it into the streets when everyone is asleep. I've seen them do it. They breed black cats too."

"The black cats spy on us. So do the streetlights. Black lasers come from the lamps. They shatter the minds of people and they have to go to the hospital. Then they've got them. But they won't get us because we know too much to be hypnotised."

"Let's go into another pub. Just one more drink."

(Black lasers fire into space from the streetlights by the factories. Something is being called).

Justice For Nobody Pointless

There is the smell of grease in the air. Huss cannot locate the source.

Huss sits in his armchair and begins to sizzle. His wife, Sarl, comes home from her job at the canal. She searches the canals at night looking for the bodies of suicides and murder victims. She sees Huss melting and waits, watching him. Huss' body is vanishing into the fabric of the armchair. He does this often. Sarl observes the full procedure until Huss has completely dissolved. She fixes herself a whiskey and sits on the sofa listening to the coal fire spit and spark. The clock on the mantlepiece ticks gently. Sarl finishes her drink and gets up. She strokes the arm of Huss' chair and feels static electricity. He's in there somewhere.

Huss wakes in the morning and goes to work. His car is old but in good condition. Sunlight shines off it's bonnet into Huss' eyes. The streets are never the same twice. They keep moving them about. FInding his office was a task but he usually found it.

Sarl wakes at mid-day and makes herself some breakfast of cereal. She does not go to work for many hours. She decides to spend her spare time in the empty room. There is no furniture in the empty room because when they did keep furniture in that room the furniture would rattle keeping them awake at

night.

The empty room was older than the rest of the house. The wooden walls were warped and flakey. Something lived there that you could not see or feel. That entity was only ever witnessed in her dreams. It looked like an octopus with a human head and it made noises like a cat. It reminded her of something she once saw in the canal. Maybe it was the same thing.

Sarl sits on the floor of the empty room and prays to the entity. She is feeding it with love to sustain it, to change it. She wants to keep it as a pet. She wants it to kill for her. She has a list of people she wants dead, including her boss. It was he who tried to kiss her once.

Sarl begins to dissolve into the floor of the empty room. This is the first time this has happened. Her husband will be pleased.

She can smell grease but cannot locate the origin.

Carried Away

Paul feared that this would be a day when he did something quite silly. He had done some silly things in the past and wasn't about to repeat any of them.

Paul got dressed in his black suit and tie, donned his longest black coat, and left the house. It was a misty day - they were so rare these days - the streets felt new, strange. Clumps of houses sailed towards him as he strolled. People swaddled in long scarves, floated into view and out again.

Paul had not lived in the city long and its streets still mystified him somewhat. He had moved here on a whim -one of the silly things he had perpetrated in his life. He had grown to regret the move as he had found being lost all the time to not be the pleasent experience he had imagined it to be.

And where was he going today? He didn't want to head into the city centre again; he had done that every day for the last week. No, today he would venture into the streets where he knew a park lay. An expanse of green studded with trees would thrill him what with the mist. So Paul headed into strange streets feeling a little excited at the prospect of being confused by the architecture and the thick white air.

After half an hour of walking he began to fear the mist had gotten the best of him. Where was the park? On the map he had looked at in the library it could be found just to the north of his home. Perhaps he had passed it by some time ago. Asking for directions was out of the question as talking to strangers was something that made him nervous. Paul decided to head back towards his house but taking a circular route. Maybe the mist would manifest a surprise or two. His wish proved to be true; soon a break between two rows of houses presented an area of grass, or at least a patch: the mist prevented him from seeing too far.

Paul entered the field noticing that the grass was well cut - and wasn't there a bench in the distance? It had to be a park. Hopefully there would be a small cafe where he could buy a cup of tea and a bun. He had neglected to have breakfast before he left his house.

There seemed to be few people in the park. Was the mist deterring them?

Dark masses loomed in the distance. Blurred shapes approached him, proving to be bushes. Then a crowd of people were disclosed by the mist. It had to be a cafe he figured. Yet on further examination the bunch of figures seemed to be waiting by a long rank of boxes - wheeled boxes at that. He was intrigued and headed for the strange display. Was it some kind of ride? By the time he was amongst the queue of people the mystery was solved. A train? Surely not - it was too small. He had seen such things on the TV -miniature trains and parks went together. But would such a humble park sport such a sight? The front of the train was still swathed in mist.

He had to take a ride on this toy train, no doubt it would encircle the park: what better way to see it? Paul headed for the front of the train. He wanted to see the scaled down engine. He was no fan of trains but he felt he wanted to

see it if it was going to be pulling him to God knows where. The mist soon spat out the end of the train -but his attention was distracted by a small station. Delightful. It looked like a typical country station. He had holidayed on the moors and seen such a station just a few years ago.

The platform was small. A few people could just about fit on it comfortably. Forming the station were a couple of tiny buildings: a ticket booth and a waiting room? He climbed onto the platform and the people parted to allow him to approach the miniature ticket booth. A window with a semicurcular hole presented itself. A face peered at him through the glass.

"How much for a ticket?" he enquired.

The face smiled.

"£5,"it said.

Paul thought it a reasonable price and dug out his purse. He had the right change and pushed a few coins through the hole in the glass. A pale hand took the coins and replaced them with a small square of brown paper. Paul took the ticket, thanked the face, and returned to the rear of the train, where some of the people were sitting in the small cars.

Paul decided to sit in the very last carriage. Most of the seats were occupied now anyway. Would the engine be powerful enough to pull them around the park? There had to be twenty cars.

Paul opened the tiny door of the end car and squeezed in. There was barely room for him and he wasn't the largest of people. Still, it would mean he wasn't jostled around too much.

The empty cars were soon filled by the crowd and Paul figured they would soon be off. There was a shrill toot at the head of the train and Paul's excitement rose. What a ride they would have through the mist.

The entire train shook. Paul nodded back and forth as the train began to move. The tiny carriages rocked slightly as they gained speed. Soon they were passing the tiny station.

Into the mist they travelled at quite a pace. The ride wouldn't take long Paul decided. He hoped it was worth the ticket price.

The train squeezed between bushes and sailed past red railings. The tracks perfomed a staccato rhythm that Paul could feel in his teeth. He was quite enthralled. Paul twisted around in his seat. The station had already been lost in the mist. He turned back and wondered what was ahead.

The train took Paul into an area of the park that looked ruined. Crumbling slabs of brickwork brushed past him. The park was old Paul realised. Relics of some lost architecture were dotted here and there. Some looked like half demolished bridges. Was there even a river? No, just a ditch at most. The train travelled over it using a newly built iron bridge; albeit a miniature version of one.

They trundled on into the mist. The train tooted its whistle scaring a flock of birds that fled into the misty sky. A sketch of some swings and a roundabout edged by. The park seemed empty of people still: a fishing lake was devoid of any fishermen, empty benches crawled past.

Then they went under a bridge. Paul bobbed his head. It was a tight fit. He was almost certain the ceiling was a just a few inches above: he could smell the damp brickwork.

Then they were out the other side and in a place that Paul could not recognise as the park. They seemed to be in an alleyway. Brick walls towered on either side, peeling doors flew past, lumps of rubbish sat squashed to the floor beside the railway tracks. And weren't they travelling faster? Things were becoming difficult to take in. The towers on either side of them lowered suddenly and became garden walls. Some were studded with shards of broken glass. Paul noticed a black shape shape that could have been a head, a head that was dangling two fleshy coloured hands over the wall.

Surely the head was too small to belong to the hands.

Paul had little time to take it all in. The train had seemed to have gained speed again.

The garden walls ended with a flash as the train tracks took them into a white expanse. More park? Mist dissolved anything in the distance to a pale blur. Paul tilted to one side - he couldn't even see the front of the train. He counted the passengers that were visible. Eight in total. Then maybe a few more where the mist was obliterating them. It felt like the mist itself was pulling them along, trying to erase them.

But the mist had not deleted everything. Shapes raced at them now. Stones? They reminded him of the ruins in the park. Had they circled back somehow? The journey had seemed stright. No, these were different stones. More like thin boulders. Some of them did look manmade however. Could nature have been so expressive? So artistic? They had limbs these stones and yet none had a head to speak of.

Paul wondered why so much art had been left in such a remote place. But who's to say this was a remote place? There could be houses beyond the mist. There had to be.

Paul watched the statues as they passed by. Ah, there were signs of life. Here he spotted a pram by one of the statues. The statue had been carved to look as if it were about to grab something from the pram. A local fly tipper's idea of a pun? Or had the artist intended it to appear that way?

Paul had no time to ponder. Another sight appeared from the mist. A desk? It had been positioned next to a statue too. But now a bed had been dumped, in the middle of four crouching statues.

And now a sink, a toilet, a TV.

The train trundled on and the stones shrank and flattened. What were they meant to be? They looked like gravestones. Paul wondered who would build a train track in a cemetary, and then noticed that the train was slowing down.

It came to a halt soon after. Paul thought they may have stopped for technical reasons. Maybe the train had broken down. Why else would they have stopped here?

The train began to shake and Paul felt relieved. They were on their way

again. But it was not the engine that was moving the carriages, it was the passengers. They had all stood up and were getting off the train. Paul watched them close their little doors behind them and walk onto the grass. They had their heads down as they did so he noticed. They seemed drained of energy. Or were they reading the gravestones?

They wandered off and were soon engulfed by the mist. Paul was alone now. Was he supposed to get off too? Was this the end of the journey?

He stood up and opened the tiny door of his carriage. He slipped through and stood on the grass before closing the train door.

The train shook and began to slide backwards. He watched it vanish engine, driver and all. Then he bowed his head and began to search the gravestones for his name.

If only he had thought to buy a return ticket.

The Rupture

There's an abscess on a park bench. It's green like the bench and is the size of a head. An orange man with black hair comes along and sits on the bench. His name is Xoox Brendaghast and works in the sock factory down Haunted Lane. He sits on the bench and sees the abscess with his orange eyes. He looks around the park: nobody is looking. Xoox fingers the abscess, his orange tongue dangling from his orange mouth. The abscess is spongey. It is clearly filled with liquid. Dare he?

Yes, he dare.

Xoox pushes his longest finger into the swelling. Its surface dents. He pushes harder into the green orb. It bursts. A sumptuous splash of grey goo issues across his tangerine hand and dangles off his knuckles. Xoox takes back his hand and sniffs the goo. It smells of food. He pops his fingers into his mouth.

It tastes bitter. His orange face screws up like a cloth.

Xoox walks home. He lives on Haunted street. Black things with fire for hands crowd the pavement with their silver prams. Ghost men play drums in their front gardens. Someone who may be Jack The Ripper gets into a tiny red car and drives off laughing to himself.

Xoox unlocks his front door and goes in. He passes the photographs of power stations in the hall without looking at them. All the tiny pigs who live in his kitchen hear him coming and vanish into holes in the skirting boards. The owl-that-isn't-there does nothing.

Black thoughts fill Xoox's mind-place. (Grey ladders lean beneath windows where pale serpents dangle in slumber or death. Lumps of coal writhe in the black flames of fireplaces: they squeak and squeal. A fat man wearing a golden dress sits down on a thin purple chair).

Xoox enters the kitchen and sniffs the air. Earlier he hid some food somewhere. He wondered where it was. Of course, it had to be in the bamboo safe. That's where he always hid it...but there was a knock at the door. Xoox ignored it. He found the food in the bamboo safe and cooked it as the knocking continued. He ate the food(green squares and red circles) and listened to the knocking. He liked the sound of people knocking. It was like a symphony to his orange ears. He watched TV(sock puppets killing each other as a baby screamed) and forgot all about the knocking. He was ready for bed before he remembered there was someone at the door. He went to answer it. Stood there was a grey policeman.

"Get lost!" Cried Xoox.

The grey policeman crumbled into a pile of grey crumbs that wandered off in all directions.

Xoox went up to bed and began to dream half way up the stairs. (He was in a queue for something. The queue vanished into a wood and brick building that emanated the smell of mud and darkness. The queue slowly shortened until he was in the building and in the dark. He could barely see the people ahead of him. He could barely see anything at all. Black shapes moved nearby like

dying cattle. Black ornaments in a black room slowly sank to the black floor and shattered silently. Before he knew it Xoox was out the other side of the building and walking away).

Xoox woke up and The owl-that-isn't-there didn't. He dressed in his orange suit and went downstairs to make breakfast. He served himself up a portion of white oblongs and ate them with his orange teeth. They were chewy and tasted of rain. During the meal Xoox began to fantasise that he was with a group of very old ladies at a disco. They were drinking blood from posh china cups as people tossed large grey spiders around. The spiders increased in size until they were throwing grey trousers with eight legs.

Xoox walked to work. A large green snake took up most of the pavement and was so long that it had no head or tail. Xoox wondered what would happen if he touched the snake. Maybe his fingers would sink into the flesh like he was poking rubbery dough. Maybe his fingers would bend like they were turnip roots. Maybe both would happen. The owl-that-isn't-there had no opinion on the matter.

Xoox joined a mob of people near the sock factory gates. They all shuffled forward until they were in the grounds of the factory. The factory bell began to ring signifying the beginning of the morning shift. Xoox couldn't wait to touch them socks and sniff them and suck them. He couldn't wait to stuff them in his mouth and...no, wait, he recalled now...he hated socks. Funny that. He wished he worked at the glove factory on Phantom avenue. They served up glove shaped cakes for dinner and wore gloves and did other kinds of glove related things. You had job security too. The entire world -all fifty square mile of it - were crying out for gloves. As far as he knew the sock factory only sold a couple of packets of socks per day. And that was to a weird purple cat who turned up every day with a quid in his mouth. No one ever saw that cat wearing socks.

Xoox sniffed his fingers as he waited for the socks to come down the conveyor belt. He could still smell something. Something like...an abscess? But he did not recall ever poking an abscess. Then he did remember. But then he forgot again.

Soon the socks came along the conveyor belt and he was lost in sock world

(the sound of socks being pulled up over slim feet. The smell of static electricity. SOCKS!)

Xoox was in a sock dream when the abscess on his face began to increase in size, sucking juices from his brain-mind. His orange skin turned green around the swelling and his thoughts were of the park and the old ladies that walked their translucent dogs there.

Xoox soon finished his shift and walked home fingering the abscess. When he walked past a ghost boy dressed as a fireman he showed him the swelling hoping he would pop it.

The boy just laughed and ran away. The owl-that-isn't-there hooted silently.

Hugs And KISSES!

Swin takes a drink of tea. He was sitting outside the cafe. He had no idea why he was sitting outside the cafe, nor why he was drinking tea. His memory is a black piece of cheese being nibbled by black mice in a dark room. Swin is looking at the graveyard across the road. He can remember something; he can remember the graveyard. He can recall dragging himself from a hole there. He came from a place of cobwebs and green lights. A place of skeletons that writhed.

No! He did not come from there. He couldn't have.

Swin walks away from the cafe. The street is pleasent enough. Homes like cottages. Gardens overflowing. This is where he comes from. His home must be here somewhere. He just needs to remember.

A car moves down the street. It is green. A skelton is driving the car.

No! A skeleton is not driving the car. It can't be.

Swin rubs his eyes. The car has gone by now. It is not evidence. It was a

phantom.

Yes, a phantom from the graveyard. Reminding you of what you are.

Swin looks at his hands. They are fleshy. He is no skeleton. He's a human not a phantom.

A group of people walk towards Swin. He examines them as they approach: two adults and two kids. Normal people. But why are they all wearing green? Swin strives to answer this but cannot. His mind is swarmed by fearful notions. He can remember the graveyard. He can remember the skeletons dancing in the green lights. The lights made them live. He needed green lights or he would die. He would cease to move and think.

Bzzzztk! Zzzzzzzz

Hugh took off the headset. That was the last time he would play Swin: The Phantom.

Glue

"So, I think running over that man with my car made me feel more alive than I've ever felt before."

"Yeah. Did you watch The Z Factor?"

(The audience laughs)

"I mean, I was buzzing for days. Everytime I think about it I get a shiver. The way the car just jumped up when I drove over him."

"Suzy Snooze was voted out for snoring too quietly."

(Laughs)

"You wouldn't think a car could lurch like that. I mean, straight away I was loaded with adrenaline. Like someone just injected a dose into me."

"I think this is the best ever series of Z Factor."

(Laughs)

"And when I got out of the car and saw the body I was like did my car do that? Wow. It was so flat."

"I really hate Steve Cream, the judge. He is just nasty for the cameras."

(Laughs)

"I stayed around to see them scraping the body up. It was so...otherworldly. I felt like I was in heaven."

"I really like Carole Snith. She tells the truth but she sugar coats it."

(Laughs)

(Black figures stand up in the audience and everyone begins to scream.)

I Will Never Forgive Them

The red man is sitting in a blue chair. He has yellow hair. YELLOW HAIR! His face is painted flesh tones but he is clearly red.

The room is painted black.BLACK! Now we have the full picture we have a fair view of this character.

The red man screams. He begins to weep. He has been sitting in the chair for five hours. Before he was sitting in the blue chair he was walking the streets, chatting to lumpy naked people. He caught the bus before that and enjoyed it. Before that he was sitting in a green chair in a room painted white. Before

that he was in a cafe eating a long purple thing. Before that he was fighting interdimensional silver beings on the edge of a firey precipice.

Before that he was at work answering a grey phone. It was his job to jeer at random people.

RANDOM PEOPLE!

Blackness covers everything. An indeterminate amount of time passes before a light comes on. Something gooey is drooling in the light. It droops, transparent, across the light and somewhere it falls with a bump.

More of the goo drips and someone screams. The gooey substance turns blue as it runs.

The light goes out and there is the sound of animals grunting. The grunting goes on for what feels like hours. Then there is silence.

The silence continues but slowly becomes a whine of machinery.

MACHINERY!

A door opens and stood there is a yellow figure. He is made of a clay-like substance. His facial features are blurred. Half formed. Black pins are sticking out of the figure, particulary in its legs. The door closes and another door opens revealing a street of people. They are ordinary people wearing ordinary brown and grey clothes.

The people are just walking and glancing at shop windows. This is all. Nothing else. There is the occasional car going past. The odd pigeon struts by and takes wing for a second. It looks like rain, but then it always does. We see a library. People are taking books out of the library, taking them back. They probably read them, although many do not. They enjoy the books, but some do not. Those books that are not ever read sit on the shelves unloved.

I will never forgive them.

Black Teeth Growing From Your Forehead

The green man is wrestling with a purple man in a red room. They roll around on the red floor trying to get the better of each other but neither seems to be able to do so. Finally the purple man bends the arm of the green man behind his back and puts pressure on it. The green man screams like a woman seeing a monster in an old film. The green man begins to melt. His arms soften into rope and and his legs fold up and merge into stumps. The purple man lets go of the green man and stands up to watch as the green man rolls into a ball of putty.

The ball of putty begins to rock gently before rolling away into a hole in the wall.

The room darkens until there is nothing to see. Then the lights come back on again. The purple man has gone.

The purple man is walking down a red street now (of all things) and is whistling. The tune is random and irritating. Black things storm past the purple man. They have yellow smoke issuing from their backs.

The purple man turns left at the bottom of the street and heads for factories. Rainbows sprout from the tops of the factories and dainty little clouds float above like ice cream covered in glitter.

The streets around the factories are made from orange brick and grey concrete sprayed with a confusion of paint. Black windows gleam here and there. Litter crowds the thin pavements and the wind plays with the litter like a cat pawing a mouse. Some of the litter gets caught in miniature tornadoes and dances beneath railway bridges. It circles and circles hypnotising the purple man. His mind swims and his vision blurs. A factory horn toots in the distance but this fails to stir the mind of the purple man.

The purple man falls to the grey pavement and the tornadoes of trash vanish.

Soon a grey van appears and parks up by the purple man. The doors to the

van open and two yellow men wearing pink masks get out. They walk up to the the purple man and pick him up. They carry him to the rear of the van and one of them opens the door. They put the purple man into the van and slam the door. They get in the van and it drives off towards the factories.

The purple man wakes up. He is in a grey room tied to a grey chair. A door opens and the green man walks in. He is laughing. Black bubbles are floating up from a hole in the top of his head.

"See what you did to me?" Says the green man pointing to head and the black bubbles.

The purple man nods.

"I have black bubbles coming out of my head now. I'm supposed to be the mayor of the city and now I look like an idiot."

"You shouldn't have melted into that ball. They always take advantage of any change in substance."

"You don't say. Well, you'll be tied up here until I say otherwise. My yellow men will be watching over you. You'll have to melt if you want to escape the chair. Then we'll see what they do to you."

"Oh, really? You think this reality will stay put for much longer? How long have you spent tied to a chair?"

The mind of the purple man began to blur...the green man screamed.

The purple man woke. He was in a stripey black and white room. He was sat on a white chair. A black pipe with a very long stem was sitting in his lap. He picked it up and sucked its end. Hot smoke filled his lungs. His mind brightened. He wondered what had happened to the green man.

<u>It Hurts To Look At You And Your Yellow Cubes</u>

The figure in the black sky is a tattered midnight rainbow billowing in the wind. Beneath is the little blue house. There are dotted lines of light connecting the house to the rainbow figure and papery arrows pointing to the chimney of the house. Green smoke is issuing from the chimney. The windows of the house are lit up and shadows flit across the light. As we come closer we hear music and laughter.

We enter the house by the front door, which opens and shuts behind us.

There are many people at the party. They wear big floppy hats and ornate dresses and brightly coloured suits. They are all drinking blue liquids and smoking purple cigars.

In the front room the party is arranged around a statue of a figure that looks like a tattered rainbow. There is a fire in the fireplace. Yellow logs burn with a blue flame.

Some of the partygoers are sat around the statue and praying. Tiny beads of white light are coming off the statue and entering the people sat around the statue.

There is an explosion in the front room. Black light flashes in all directions and people are blown apart. Limbs litter the floor. Heads roll around on the carpet. A hand lands on a table and writhes. Intestines hang from a lampshade. Blood covers the walls.

People from other rooms in the house run to see what has happened. Their eyes scan the carnage. Torsos sit in chairs. An eye sits on the floor. The fire has been put out by a splash of blood. The rainbow statue sits in the centre of the room unharmed. People swoon and scream.

The party is not over.

Partygoers enter the front room and begin to play with the severed limbs. The limbs flex as if dancing. Shredded flesh shivers. The mouths of heads move as if speaking. Tongues poke out. Eyes dart left and right. Nobody has died.

They cannot die because they worship the rainbow figure.

It begins to rain outside. The rain is all colours. The colours merge in puddles and turn white.

Arabesque

The sea is in the fields and in the sky and in the people who walk with baskets full of strawberries in the hot sun. The sea is not real but the sea is in the church where a wedding is taking place. The sea is in the confetti being thrown over the bride and groom. The sea is in the grins of the guests although the sea is an illusion. There is no sea here yet the sea is in the flowers being held by the bride. The bride is not real but the groom is. None of the guests know the bride is not real. They assume so much.

The bride was built by the groom in his basement from a clock and a mannequin. He put the sea into the mix too. He found the sea in a backstreet secondhand shop some wintery day. It was contained in a snow globe. The globe contained a winter scene: a house, a tree, a snowman. He knew that scene was from his past, when he was a child. He did not know how a scene from his childhood could get into a snow globe. But it had.

The sea is in the groom too. It is in his brain. It is in his spine and his bones. The sea is not in everyone's bones because the sea is an illusion. There is no sea in this world but the sea is in the clouds and the rainbows that appear everywhere. The city is full of rainbows. The citizens love the rainbows because they came from rainbows. They are rainbows that fell from the sky. Rainbows are dead people. Or people who never lived. The city is made from stone that also once was rainbows. Everything is a rainbow. Everything has the sea in it even though the sea is not real.

There is a boy who lives in the city who knows the sea is in everything and who knows the sea is an illusion. This boy has magic powers. He can turn people back into rainbows and he knows it. He plans to grow up and become

a saviour. He will turn everyone back into rainbows. He practises on animals. He has turned fifty two cats into rainbows. The rainbows haunt his bedroom but only he can see them yet.

Jaunty Jaundiced Justice

Fat ghosts linger in Bright Street. They wear black shrouds and halloween masks. They have pink rubber washing up gloves on their hands and green wellingtons on their feet. They wander the street granting wishes that nobody has made. Last week they produced a tiger that nobody had wished for. The tiger was a stuffed tiger but it still scared a few people. They are bad ghosts, bitter for being trapped in the area. They would have preferred Hotchkin Avenue where there were shops and more people.

But they were the victims of the blue sphere and therefore had to haunt a specific location.

The blue sphere comes to people in their dreams. It starts small but increases in size. It feeds off attention. When it gets to a certain size it sucks the soul out of the dreamer's body and turns them into a fat ghost.

There is an army of fat ghosts now. Someday they will overpower the city and take it over granting wishes that nobody made. The only hope is that people do not pay attention to the blue sphere.

But this story is not about the fat ghosts or the blue sphere, it is about Doov. Doov is a poet who lives in an attic somewhere in the city. His poems come true, you see. Now, wasn't that a nice story?

Oh, you want more? Well, let's see...yes, Doov is tall and thin and has a large nose. He has white hair even though he's young. When he's not writing poems he's waging war with warty humanoids down the cafe under the railway bridge. They blast him with words and he blasts them with black energy that issues from his fingertips. He is immune to their words because

he is a poet.

Nah. I'm lying about the warty humanoids. He just meets his friends at the cafe. Some of them are poets too and they swap verse over cups of sweet tea. Doov is the best poet of the group and they all look up to him. He has been published twice and is earning enough to make a living.

Ok, I'm lying again. There is no Doov. This story IS about the fat ghosts and the blue sphere. There's something I should add about the blue sphere. It also appears in stories. Sometimes it appears in books already written. Like Warbrick Sessenger's HOTEL OF THE PRAMS. You probably read that at school. I know I did. The blue sphere slots into books and people read them and the sphere grows in size and sucks the soul of the reader right out of their flesh.

The blue sphere is sometimes written about in new works of fiction. So if you should happen on a story about a blue sphere STOP READING IT.

HAHAH. I'm lying again. This story IS about Doov. One day Doov was writing a poem in the attic and he started writing about a blue sphere that grows in size and sucks the soul out of people and turns them into fat ghosts. He named the sphere EARTH. You may have heard of it. You may have even been there. If so then you would be surprised to know that it ended up as a device that slots itself into dreams and stories...and poems, only to suck the soul out of people's bodies and turn them into fat ghosts. The people who live on Earth turned their planet into this cunning trap out of pure spite. They had been abandoned by their gods. They are a sinful bunch.

They did nothing but sin, to be honest. So don't be so surprised by them turning their planet into a trap.

Oh, all right then this story isn't about any of that. It's about Ho-Cho McSmith. He works in a hair factory and one day he dreamt about a man called Doov who had his soul sucked into a blue sphere and turned into a fat ghost. McSmith thought little of the dream once he had awoken. He was too worried about the curse of the black glove. Whoever found the black glove was doomed to be followed by grey phantom micemen. People in the city were talking about it. McSmith heard them at bus stops, in shop queues and

over the walls of toilet cubicles.

But who is to say what this story is REALLY about? It could be about Sally Alley. She owns an amulet that gives her the power to turn poo into gold. It could be about Zoogle Sy Dastophene. There's nothing interesting about him to tell you so this ends the story.

The Diagram

(We see a black chalkboard)

Goob is sat on the bus going into town. He is sat next to a green woman with an external liver. There are tentacles coming out of the liver that occasionally writhe and slap about hitting the woman in the face. Goob wants to ask why. Why do you have a liver like that? Some people are born that way. Some have metaphysical surgery to make them like that. But Goob was too polite to ask the woman.

(We see a black piece of chalk held by a yellow gooey man)

The bus rumbles and shakes. Goob enjoys the motions of the bus. It is like the womb, except he is sharing the womb with all manner of people. Across from Goob is a figment in the form of a dogman with arms like a body builder and legs like thin posts. Red arrows are dancing around its head that leave a golden wave in the air as they move. Goob wonders how such a thing can happen. He is probably the only one wondering this in the entire world.

(We see the yellow gooey man drawing on the black chalkboard with the black chalk)

Goob thinks he's in a comic book. This impression lasts for ten seconds exactly. Such thoughts only last for this amount of time. It is a law written into the fundaments of this reality. Goob wonders why he was thinking he was in a comic book. He also wonders why there was an entity running up

and down the aisle of the bus. He cannot see much of the entity. He gets sudden flashes of white with red spots. It is probably the spirit of an artist on another dimension, or a ghost of someone about to be born.

(We see a black chalkboard)

The bus reaches Goob's stop and he gets up, dodging the tentacles of the liver woman, and presses the button to tell the driver he wants to get off. The bus pulls up to the stop and Goob gets off, thanking the driver.

The town centre is a number of grey buildings with black windows. Black ladders run up the sides of the buildings. Black forests grow on the flat roofs and the sound of animals roaring can be mutely heard from those black forests. Goob walks through the town centre. There are many people joining him in walking, including a man dressed in white who has a purple face and green hair. His nose is decorated with many rings and studs. Goob passes by him and listens to the man's nose jangling.

Then Goob's arm is grabbed.

He turns to the grabber and sees a yellow woman wearing a blue coat made from putty.

"Hello Goob," says the woman, smiling with silver teeth.

Goob does not recognise the woman. He writhes his caught arm in an attempt to free it from the strange woman's grip. But he is unable to break her hold.

"It's been so long since I saw you, Goob. How have you been? Are you still living by the haunted quarry? I heard it's over-run by polterghosts."

"I'm nobody, lady. I live nowhere," Goob answers.

"Oh? I lived nowhere for some time. I lived with a snail faced man with golden arms and a black tail. Do you know him? I bet you're best friends with him."

"I don't know anyone, lady. Could you give me back my arm?"

"You should come with me. I have something special to show you just down the street."

"Something special? Sure."

The woman pulled on Goob's arm taking him to somewhere he had never been before. The street was thin. No cars could fit down it, only people on bikes. The street smelled of cooking meat. Goob figured there were kitchens nearby.

"Where are we going?" Goob asked, his caught arm aching. His legs kept tripping him up.

"I'm going to show you something amazing," said the woman, and she dragged him through an unlocked door. The room was bare, derelict. The walls were grey and wet. The floor was bare concrete and broken pieces of wood littered it.

The woman pointed to something.

"Look," she said.

There was a black chalkboard on the wall. The room stank of abandonment.

"I don't see anything special," Goob said. "It's just a chalkboard."

"But it has been written on. Can't you see? Come closer."

The woman pulled him to the board. Goob stepped on something like a lump of black dough. There was a lot of black dough on the ground around the chalkboard.

"See?" said the woman, who seemed to be drooling red drool.

Goob looked at the board. There was nothing written on it.

"I see nothing," Goob said angrily. "Let me go!"

A noise alerted Goob to his rear. Someone had closed the door to the room.

Goob craned his neck to see. There was a man made from yellow goo standing there. He was swaying slightly.

The woman shook Goob's arm roughly.

"This is the teacher. He's here to show you the diagram. It's all you need to know."

The yellow goo man began to walk towards Goob. He was gargling.

Why They Are Crumbling

A naked blue woman floats in mid air. She has a blue ball for a head and black squiggles are flying from her. The squiggles are words, but they are made up words.

Beneath the floating woman is a levitating bright red box. The lid of the box is opening slowly. A black thing is creeping out of the box. It is something like a hand but gnarled and lumpy like ancient wood. There is a scream as the hand falls from the box and lands on the ground.

The ground is a grey pavement. The pavement is bordered by expanses of millions of tiny green buildings growing like grass. The black hand lies on the pavement, not moving.

The lid of the red box opens again and another black hand slips out with a scream and lands on top of the first black hand. This hand is not as warped as the first and is moving ever so slightly.

A third black hand falls from the box with a scream and falls onto the first and second hand. This hand is writhing and is clearly still alive.

The naked blue lady floats down to the pile of hands and picks them up one at a time. The lid of the bright red box opens and she puts the first and second hand back into the box. The third, and less mutated, hand she keeps. She

holds it to the blue ball of a head and there is a flash of purple light. Now the blue ball head has a mouth. It is tiny but contains perfect white teeth.

The woman begins to nibble the black hand as she floats back up above the red box.

The Truth Is

The tree is swaying in the wind. There is no wind.

The man stood beneath the tree has his arms open and held upwards as if he is about to catch something. There is nothing to catch.

The tree and the man are in a park. There are swings and roundabouts that are swinging and spinning. There are no children.

The park is in a city. There are cars moving down the roads. There is no one driving them.

But someone is walking down a street. It is Jofo Moolk. He has been living in the city since he escaped the green dimension. It is not a real city, and he knows that, but it is better than the green dimension.

Jofo is green. He is made from a kind of frozen green liquid and wears green clothes made from steel wool. He knows he does not belong in this city and the forces that govern this world are often trying to trick him into leaving. He will find himself outside a green door that is edging open revealing a green light. He is expected to enter that doorway back to the green dimension but instead he runs away. Sometimes he falls asleep and has green dreams. He wakes up and finds a green light in the room. They are trying to push him back into the green dimension. But he is too smart for them.

Life in this world is not easy. He spends entire weeks never seeing another soul. He wished more people lived here. But this world is the truth. And the truth does not exist. Jofo wonders how long this world will last. Sometimes

entire streets disappear. The city is shrinking all the time as truth shrinks. Someone is killing this world piece by piece which means the truth is being killed bit by bit. There is a war going on somewhere he cannot see. Maybe he is the one fighting the war. Maybe his presence in this world is destroying it. The truth needs to be unseen. That is why there are so many lies. The green dimension was a world of lies. That's why he slipped away from it with his ritual. The ritual of the laughing dog he called it, even though it involved no dogs and no laughter. But then that was the point.

There would be only one option left to him if this world was disappearing: he would have to perform the ritual of the laughing dog again and find another world to live in.

But where in this city would he find a crying cat?

Dark Black Blank Measurements

Horace had a blue dog growing out of him. Its front paws were sprouting from his chest and its rear paws were attached to his belly. This made it impossible for him to button up his purple coat.

The dog growled constantly but could not attack Horace because the dog was boneless and floppy.

This did not stop Horace having all manner of adventures. He spent four weeks crawling over a yellow cube in a bright pink ditch. He once killed a red triangle with a leather shoe. One time he joined a gang of white faced priests who performed illegal burial ceremonies on the outskirts of Boil City. They spent a summer praying for the dead and lived in a derelict church haunted by skinned circles. They drank holy water and ate communion bread and laughed so loud that the green police found them and chased them into a dusty wasteland where people ate things that were a combination of cacti and scorpions. This writhing turquoise food gave the eater visions and elated states of mind. Horace would eat the food and his dog would froth at the

mouth and whine. Horace himself saw images of a strange world where people looked normal and dressed normally and worked to earn money to buy food and pay rent.

Horace had adventures all the time, but still he wished he could be rid of the dog growing out of his torso. He had met a surgeon one day in a subway tunnel. This doctor of flesh ate albino rats and sucked on milky stalactites. He wore a paisley suit and diving boots that clomped when he walked. The surgeon told him he could remove the dog but the dog would die because it had no bones. Horace had thought it over for days as he ate rat meat and sucked on dripping rock outgrowths. Sadly the doctor became a tiny silver city populated by tiny silver people. Horace took advantage of the situation and became the city's god. He ordered the miniscule population to erect a statue of him and when he was angry he squashed the citizens of the city with his thumbs.

Then one day the city turned into a small blue girl wearing a bright black dress. The girl had looked at Horace and ran away crying. Horace figured there was no chance of getting rid of his dog. The dog seemed equally as sad about the situation. It flopped about trying to run away from Horace. But it was stuck fast to Horace's body.

Horace today lives inside a giant golden globe that contains massive lumps of red clockwork machinery that seem to serve no purpose. He eats fruit from a tree that grows in the globe and drinks blood from the wounds of dying people who were maimed in a local war that took place every morning near the globe.

Horace had no idea why these people were fighting. He assumed they simply had nothing better to do. He wasn't about to advise them otherwise. He wasn't that kind of guy.

Magnets, Danger and Bathtub

"Well, I listen to a lot of Chiansky, you see, so I have a lot of time on my hands and lives dwindle to sunburst yellow points of sauce," said the man with two spines and a blue baby face.

"Chiansky is ok, but if you really want to know blood clots you really need to be wandering around an infinite chemists and getting high off the fumes of melting brown plastic and seeing the flesh coloured combs and so on," replied the man with rainbow fingers.

(There is a grey house. Inside that grey house is a small grey house. And inside that grey house there is an even smaller grey house. Inside that grey house is yet an even smaller grey house and inside that tiny house is an eye.)

A young Chiansky is walking to his art course one summery day. He has yet to pick up a flute and find his true calling. He is as yet still enthralled by the thought of being a painter. He has been attending art college for three months walking this way to his classes each day. Then he spies a lump of black chewing gum stuck to the hot grey pavement. He crouches to get a better look at the gum. The shape and texture enchants him. He wonders if he can pry the gum off the pavement whole so he can take it with him and paint it. His art pals at the college would love it, he figures. Chiansky pushes a long fingernail under the edge of the black substance and attempts to lever it off the tarmac. Sadly the gum warps as he pushes its soft edge.

"The magic is gone!" He cries.

A policeman in the next street breaks into a run for a few seconds. He stops, confused as to why he began to run.

In a house by the art college a painter and decorator begins to draw a shape on the wall he is painting. He has no idea where the image is coming from.

In the art college a tutor vomits a rainbow of glitter over the floor of his classroom. His students laugh and cry at the same time.

(There is a river that runs through the industrial parts of the city. There is something wrong about this particular stretch of river. No one who sees it comes away happy. The water is brown here but the entire river is brown

from head to tail. Maybe someone died here. Maybe many people died here. Maybe something was born in one of the factories and escaped into the river. Not a thing of flesh but a monster of ideas.)

"Or maybe huge veins snake through his mind and blast the black eyes of the leather man. Yeah. Did you ever think that?" Asked the man with a melting face and thousands of tiny red fingers.

"Or maybe a slimey arm wound will transfix the brickwork of defunct Gods and balance the cosmic energies of said defunct Gods to the point of..." said the man wearing an upside down hippo mask.

"Yes?"

"I..."

"YES?"

"Well...stripey..."

"Stripey?"

"Stripey banks of mud. Polka dot water. A tiny pink boat piloted by a model frog. A dead god living in the plastic frog. The god has a plan in his mind that was put there by a silent red wizard. Easy...easy...listening music, easy."

[black, black, black, black, black, white]

Chiansky sits in a chair.

Blamish Blamush

The skinny man is wearing red trousers and a green shirt. He is kicking his long legs into the air for the amusement of his friends. His friends are all wearing black. They have their faces painted yellow.

The skinny man hates his friends. He is walking down the street and hating them from a distance.

The skinny man is eating a bacon sandwich in a cafe by the mortuary. His mind is a glowing ball living on another dimension where dead people live. Eating the bacon sandwich is bringing his mind to a higher plane of existence where there are people who have never lived.

The skinny man is dancing at a nightclub. His black clad friends are dancing around him. The skinny man loves his friends. He has hugged and kissed them all at some point.

The skinny man is dead inside.

The skinny man smokes a pipe while Dennis, his best friend, smokes a spliff. They are listening to their favourite band BLACK MATHS and getting high. The skinny man's mind is a cloud in heaven sending out streaks of lightning that look, and feel, like straggly tree branches. Dennis is dissolving into a puddle of clothes. He is suddenly wearing clogs. Something purple crawls out of the pile of clothes. The skinny man gets up and stamps on it. He hates Dennis and the things he changes into.

The thing that the skinny man has stamped on is not dead yet.

The skinny man picks it up and admires the simplicity of it. One black eye. A wide mouth. Tentacles for legs. It seems to look like Dennis too. And it is speaking. The skinny man hears the words in his mind.

"Find me in the purple graveyard," it says to the skinny man.

"I'm the grey haunter of old," it also says to the skinny man.

The skinny man is in the library with Hyacinth, his present girlfriend. He met her in the library two months ago and they like to go there together. They met by the horror books in a quiet corner. They had both reached for the same book at the same time. It was a book by Rimsy Cempbill. The skinny man had let her have the book. She had asked him if he was a fan. He had told her he was. They went for a drink after that and fell in love. They made love like

balls of mercury meeting.

The skinny man hates Hyacinth. He is walking in a wasteland. Ruined buildings litter the rocky landscape. There has been a war here. Gutted tanks sit here and there. The odd tree grows in the desolation. The skinny man runs towards a building. He has been here before. He climbs a chipped concrete staircase towards the top floor. There is someone with him. There is someone climbing the stairs with him. The skinny man sees the man, who is even skinnier than the skinny man. The skinny man knows who the skinnier man is.

The skinny man sits at home. He is listening to PINK GEOGRAPHY on his stereo and sniffing glue from a plastic bag. The pain has lifted and he is high. Higher than the edge of the universe. A naked body is lying at his feet that is suddenly wearing clogs. A knife is protruding from the back of the body. The knife falls out and hits the floor. AND WHAT A NICE CARPET!!!!!!!!!!

The skinny man is with his friends at their house. In his pocket is a plastic bag with a lump of flesh in it. His friends are drinking cider and listening to BEIGE CHEMISTRY. The skinny man took some pills an hour ago and they are just starting to kick in. He looks at his black clad friends with their painted yellow faces with new eyes. They look like animals. Their cider is his urine. They have machine minds. They would look better naked.

One of his friends offers him a spliff. He takes it and puts it to his lips. Something blue is in the skinny man's mind.

Something blue and ice cold.

"Groovy music, eh?" Susan says.

"There's something blue and ice cold in my mind," the skinny man replies before he sucks the end of the spliff.

"Crazy," says Susan before she dances away back to her cider bottle.

Devastation Station Tat At

Puxi was in the library. He was looking for a book about pirate cooking. Pirates had their own sea food recipes. He wanted to replicate them for Hinph, his girlfriend. Puxi looked under pirates then under cooking but found nothing to aid him in his quest.

Then something horrible happened.

Puxi slipped between a man and a bookcase. The man had been scanning the books and Puxi had passed by obscuring the view of the books. Puxi had thought nothing of it as he had done it, but having done it he began to worry. The man looking at the books had been forced to look at Puxi for a second. What effect might this have had on the man's mind? On his soul? A second of time, true, but it only takes a second to twist a man's psyche.

Puxi gave up on his search for a pirate cookery book and left the library, his mind a bookcase of pain.

The man had done nothing to Puxi but get in his way and he rewards that by flashing himself at the man? This was just like subliminal imagery being cut into films to influence the watcher. Who knew what a flash of him in his black coat could have done to the man? The man may have his entire life altered. Puxi may have implanted any kind of info into the man's brain. He may want to go out and buy a black coat!

The more Puxi thought about it the more he worried.

Suppose the man thinks he's me, wondered Puxi as he caught the bus home. Suppose the man becomes me? I may find him at my door later trying his key in my lock. What will become of him if he cannot get in?

Puxi arrived home and thought of ringing the police to warn them that he had obscured the view of a bookcase for a second. But why put himself in

trouble? What would that gain? But he had to tell someone. He had to tell Hinph. Maybe she would know what to do. He rang her number, his fingers trembling.

Hinph picked up her phone.

"Hello?" she said.

"It's Puxi. I was in the library and I passed between a man and a bookcase."

"Oh my god! What are you going to do?"

"I don't know! What if the guy is going mad right now? Someone could get hurt."

"What about you? You cut through his visual beam. You may be infected."

"No! I didn't think of that. Suppose I picked up something from his eyes or something?"

"You need to ask Yotaro for help."

"Yes. I need Yotaro. He will help. Are you coming over later?"

"NO! I might catch something too."

"Oh god!"

"I'll call you tomorrow, Puxi. Speak to Yotaro right now."

"Ok. Bye."

Puxi closed all the curtains in his flat and opened the closet door. A slight glow emanated from the shoebox on the shelf. He took off the lid and looked inside. Yotaro was sleeping inside. He looked like a shaved mouse with muscular arms and legs. He wore a tiny golden crown which was the source of the glow. Puxi took the box and put it on top of his TV.

"Yotaro, Yotaro, speak to me. Give me counsel," Puxi chanted.

Slowly Yotaro began to stir. He opened his froglike eyes and began to stretch his limbs. Finally he stood up and looked at Puxi.

"What can I do for you, master? Speak and it shall be given."

"Oh, Yotaro. I have done an unspeakable thing and only you can help me."

"Speak."

"I was in the library. I passed between a man and a stack of books."

"Oh? Well that's that then. I can do nothing for you."

"DON'T SAY THAT! There must be something I can do."

"I had a master who did the same thing. He was turned into a simulacrum within a month. The landlord found me and I was his new servant."

"A simulacrum? I'm going to become a simulacrum?"

"Who knows what will happen? Who knows what was going through the man's mind when you passed in front of him? You may be lucky."

"Lucky?"

"You might just pass into another plane of existence. You may end up in a better place."

"But I would never see Hinph again," Puxi said sadly.

"You can never see her no matter what happens. And you must pass me on to another master."

"What? But who will cut my hair how I like it? Who will protect me from the golden people?"

"You will have to make do. Things will have to change from now on. You

need to take me and this box and leave it in A public lavatory so I can be found again."

"Never."

"Then I will have to force you."

There was a bang on Puxi's front door at that moment. Puxi froze. Was this Yotaro's doing?

"What's that?" Puxi asked.

"Go and see," Yotaro said.

Puxi made for the front door and peeked through the glass. There was the man. The man he had passed in front of in the library.

"No!"

The man knocked on the door again. Puxi found his hand going to the door handle. He had to open it. He turned the handle and pulled the door open.

The man stepped forward.

"I've come for Yotaro," the man said.

(Puxi spent the next ten years hiding in an alleyway. After the first five years he forgot who he was. Sometimes his arms would stretch long and thin. Sometimes he knew how to save the world.)

White Rods of Clay Piercing A Green Orb Of Iron

The blonde woman stands at her balcony. She is wearing a pale blue dress and holding a green rose. Across the street is a white building where a man stands with a bow and arrow. He is aiming at the heart of the woman.

Later the man is walking past a river. A woman is bathing in the water. The man takes out a knife.

The man sits in his living room. He is listening to music on a record player and flipping through an art book. Something brown appears in the room.

The blonde woman goes shopping. The shops are gay and she spends a lot of time in each shop perusing the wares. She buys soap and bread and cheese and butter.

The man is struggling with an anchor. He is strong but the anchor is heavy. He is dragging it down an alley leaving a white mark on the floor.

The man is performing magic tricks for people sat outside a cafe. It is night and the stars are twinkling like fireworks. The man makes coins disappear into thin air.

The blonde woman is stroking a red animal in a wood. There is fire burning everywhere. Smoke sails past like phantoms. The red animal is large like a wolf but has a tail like a squirrel and a head like a bird.

The blonde woman is putting on make up in the mirror. Insects as large as cats sit on the floor around her feet.

The blonde woman is dancing in a glorious garden. Statues watch her and weep.

The man runs through the city, chased by a gang of men. He climbs a wall and drops into a yard.

The man takes a bath. There is a large red crab in the water.

The blonde woman is teaching a dwarf how to play the piano. The dwarf is grey skinned and has a bright green nose. His short fingers stab at the keys like a cat attacking a mouse.

The man is climbing a drainpipe. He is wearing a black mask and black clothes and gloves.

The man is sawing wood by a cottage. An old woman is bringing him a tray of buns.

The blonde woman is sewing her dress.

The blonde woman is drinking orange juice in her kitchen. A large black cat is sitting on the floor licking its paw.

The man is dying in his bed.

The blonde woman is dying in her bed.

Black Rigid Circles Panting And Vomiting

Red statues stand in a grey concrete square. Dead trees sprout. Green litter spins. The black buildings around the square are thin and tall and spotted with white windows.

Soof enters the square via an archway. He is thin and wearing a black suit. He is smoking a cigar that gives off blue smoke. The smoke does not disappear like normal smoke. It forms into solid objects. Blue bushes with blue berries dangling.

Soof picks the berries and eats them.

(A boat floats in Soof's dream. It has transparent sails. Soof wants to join the crew of the boat but the boat is gliding away into the sky leaving him behind)

Soof wakes and dresses in his black suit. He leaves his home and heads down thin streets that contain the jangling of bells from distant churches. Soof walks beneath trees that drop dancing blossoms onto him. Someone is

singing from a window. It could be male or female.

Soof walks past a wall that has collapsed. People stripped to the waist are picking up the bricks and collecting them in a garden. Someone is playing violin somewhere.

Soof finds a cafe and enters the door. A skeletal woman stands behind the counter. She is weeping blue tears. The walls of the cafe are covered in black and white photographs of people and landscapes.

Soof orders a cup of tea and a slice of strawberry cake. He takes them to a table and lights a cigar. The cigar gives off yellow smoke. Soof notices that the smoke is attracted to the photographs on the wall. It is clinging to them. Slowly the photographs become colour.

Soof walks the streets. In the middle of a yellow street a red and black mass sits. People with shovels are clearing it up. Soof walks up to the red and black mass and notices white bones in amongst it. There are skulls too. A man puts his hand into the mass and plucks out a skull. He shows it to Soof and laughs. Soof puffs on his cigar and blows yellow smoke at the skull. It starts to ooze colour. Blues of the sea and sky. Greens and oranges of nature's fecundity. The man holding the skull stops laughing and looks sad. Soof walks on and finds an avenue where everyone is playing guitars and drums and pianos.

Night comes drooling down the walls. Stars wink and the moon is silence. People are walking the dark streets in search of alcohol and love. They laugh in each other's arms and mingle in alleyways with black cats. Bars gleam in the darkness. Women in glorious dresses dance in and out. Music trickles through the cracks in the walls. Men in suits cling to lamp posts, their minds drowned. A horse drawn carriage rattles on the cobblestones taking a couple to a party. A man sings in a garden, a sword in one hand and a woman in the other. Black shadows flit across streetlights the colour of the moon. A woman drinks from a glass of twinkling wine and cheers, her victorious voice escaping along crooked thoroughfares into the inky depths of the city. There are echoes from fellow drinkers in other streets and squares.

Soof picks a bar at random and makes his way through the crowd of amber coloured revellers. The people are skeleton thin or round like ragged barrels.

Some are laughing like monkeys or dancing like whirlpools. Gaslights burn holes into Soof's vision and candles smoulder on tables littered with gleaming glasses. The air is thick with cigar smoke that smells of far away places. Women notice Soof with glinting eyes but simply look away smiling to themselves. Men see Soof also and a sad look drops across their shadowy faces. They return to their mugs of ale and glasses of wine and to their mysterious women.

Soof reaches the bar and signals to the tall blonde man serving. He orders a glass of red wine. He sips it and decides to make friends of the people here. He takes out a cigar and lights it. He puffs out purple smoke.

Light Is Death

The thing is brown and white. The thing is floating in the green room. The thing is long and bobbly and has limbs that are boneless and wave about.

Hinsy is avoiding the brown and white thing as he moves around the room. Hinsy has a long thin rod with which he prods the ground attempting to kill small purple animals. The animals are deformed and come in many shapes. Some have tentacles and some have tiny black horns. He is having trouble swatting the creatures because they move so quickly.

Hinsy runs to kill one of the purple animals and hits his head on the floating brown thing. He swoons and turns white. Even his clothes turn white. The rod in his hands turns white.

Hinsy flops to the ground and the purple creatures rush to him. They bite him and gnaw at his flesh. His blood is white. His bones are grey sticks.

Hinsy's wife comes home. She is naked except for a red dress, blue shoes and a green hat.

"Bloom singe hurry flush depths," she says, kicking the purple monsters

away from her husband. She is carrying a yellow basket which she tips on the ground pouring out more purple creatures. Some of them have long thin snouts, some of them are wearing tiny black hats.

The wife walks into the kitchen and bends over by the sink. She sticks her arms out and waggles them furiously.

"Black," she says.

Later Hinsy is in the bedroom undressing. He is naked except for yellow bandages over his wounds. He is not so white now. He gets into bed and screams long and hard before falling asleep. He has white dreams of winter. He is having a snowball fight with a gang of scarecrows wearing spotty suits and halloween masks. He is building a snowman with dirty snow. The sea is lapping at the base of the snowman dissolving it with its salty tongue. Hinsy is walking through deep snow that screams when he pounds his feet into it.

"Jinx night gusts into hollow tree," he says.

Hinsy's wife is standing over her sleeping husband and writhing her hands in the air. She is eating something white. She is remembering the clinic where she was born. She is thinking about the doctor with the claws and the big black wig. His skin was scarred and tight so his lips and eyes were distorted. He wore black stockings and blue ballet shoes and would dance all the time except when he was squatting and crying. Grey energy came off his head that looked like lumpy smoke. And his name was Nill.

Hinsy wakes and screams like a woman. He screams as he dresses and screams as he washes his face in the bathroom. His wife is outside the bathroom eating something black that writhes. She eats it all.

The brown and white thing in the living room has gone but has been replaced by a green and pink cube floating in the air and giving off black sparks. There is a number six written on the cube.

Hinsy and his wife approach the cube with blue mittens on their hands. They touch the sides of the cube and push it. The black sparks do not harm them.

All the purple animals have vanished. There are tiny black bones in the corners of the room.

Hinsy stops touching the cube and begins to move from foot to foot in a tiny dance. His head is floppy.

"Glue dogs hint haughty swiftness," he says.

His wife rushes around the room screaming. Green blood leaks from her slit of a mouth.

The cube is shrinking quickly. Soon it has gone. Hinsy searches for it but cannot find it. He begins to weep.

The TV in the corner switches on showing an image of the green and pink cube. Hinsy sits down in a chair and watches, laughing. His wife vanishes for a second and reappears. Black things are crawling on her shoulders now. She picks them off and eats them one by one until there is only one left. This shall be her pet.

Hinsy's wife leaves the house with her yellow basket. She walks down a wonky red street with small black clouds in the sky. She stops at a shop. The silver statue serving behind the warped green counter smiles and waves at her. Hinsy's wife waves back before being sick on the floor noiselessly. Her vomit is white and moves about the floor leaving a glistening trail. She puts her basket on the counter and says...

"High fusty deign with."

The silver man serving turns around and kneels down on the floor near a black cardboard box. He puts his hands inside and scoops out small purple creatures. He stands up and turns around and puts the creatures in the basket.

"Not is springboard is rightful tonight hunting vector," he says.

Hinsy's wife returns home and tips the yellow basket on the floor of the living room. The small purple creatures spill out and run around the floor.

Hinsy is still laughing at the cube on the TV screen.

The Woman Is Dancing With You

Toog is wearing a purple shirt with yellow spots. He is also wearing grey pants and red shoes. Toog has a blue face and green hair. Toog is standing by a swimming pool. There is a creature in the water. Toog wants to swim but the creature scares him. Toog moves his blue hands in the air leaving silver energy. The silver energy rises like smoke into the sky. There are square red clouds in the black sky. The sun is green and bears white words.

Toog walks down a street of yellow houses with blue roofs. He comes to a house with a red door. He knocks on it. His knocks are silent. The door opens. Nobody is standing there.

"May I come in?" asks Toog. Toog nods and walks into the house. The house is cold. Toog shivers and rubs his arms. Black pictures are nailed to the walls. Black pictures are nailed to the ceiling. White pictures are nailed to the floor. Toog stands on one of the white pictures and hears bells jangling.

"May I come in?" asks Toog.

Toog reaches into his pocket and finds a green thing. He sniffs it and begins to eat it. Black smokes issues from Toog's mouth. Toog can hear piano music coming from somewhere.

"You should let me in," Toog says.

Toog leaves the house laughing.

Toog is sat in a park he has never seen before. He thought he knew all the parks.

"I thought I knew all the parks," Toog says. There are people walking in the park. Some of them are yellow some of them are grey. Some of them are yellow and grey. It is the yellow and grey people he fears.

"May I come in?" Toog asks.

Toog walks through the park. There is a silver and black building in the park. It is round and square at the same time. There is no visible door that Toog can find. Something is leaking from the top of the building. It is pink and like runny jelly. Toog watches it run down the side of the building. It pools at the base of the building and Toog rushes over to look. There are things moving in the slime.

"If you don't let me in..." Toog says.

Toog walks from the park listening to piano music. The houses are black around the park. They look burnt. White people sit in the windows staring at him. He can see fear in their eyes. Blue smoke comes from their chimneys. Piano music seethes from their windows and doors. It is the most frightening sound Toog has ever heard.

The streets become gradually yellow as Toog walks. The music is friendlier. People wearing green dresses pass him by in crowds. They are all carrying gayly decorated packages. They are going to a party, Toog figures. He loves parties.

Toog climbs a giant staircase up a cloudy green mountain. The sea writhes below. The stairs lead to a conical red tower. Toog finds the door to the tower open. He goes inside. There is a gang of yellow people in the room. They all have their backs to Toog. They turn together and show him their bloated orange faces. Their eyes are black and fat. They all stick out their purple tongues and lick their lips.

"You can come in now," they say in unison.

New Grid Disputes

Black liquid is spurting from Stibb's purple head. It sounds like air escaping

from a balloon. Stibb is smiling with his white eyes closed.

"Ahhhh, that hits the spot, " he says with blue lips and a green tongue.

The black liquid vanishes as it hits the ceiling. It does not belong here and so is transported to its own plane of existence through hidden dimensions. Stibb is not aware of this, he simply does not care why his walls are always clean after a black spurt session.

Stibb is made from a substance like clay or soft stone. He once spent a year dragging a gigantic suitcase through a forest. He once slept in a tube for two months because he believed he simply had to. He shared the tube with a tiny bear that vomited honey for Stibb to eat.

Now Stibb lives on Avenue Street. There are a lot of people living on Avenue Street. They all play piano. Some days fifty concertos pile through his windows at the same time. But he does not mind as he is allergic to silence. It brings him out in silver boils. Tiny fish live in those shiny boils. Tiny insect faced fish that tickle his flesh with their insistent fins.

Stibb fights with a giant black glove each day. It comes from the pantry each morning to attack him and squeeze him. But he knows how to exploit its weaknesses. He gets the better of it every day and sends it weeping back to the cobwebby depths of the pantry.

But right now Stibb is washing green blood from his flesh coloured shoes. He had been stamping on mind parasites again. They crawled out of his mind when he was asleep. They nipped his flesh with their yellow claws and clamps. They made good eating though and right now he had a pan full of their crushed bodies boiling in the kitchen.

Stibb cleans his shoes and stirs the boiling pan of mind parasites. Their yellow shells turned black when they were ready to eat. He ate them most days. Some days he didn't produce any mind parasites during sleep. This seems to be because of the church bells from next door. Whenever they played their bells the parasites did not come. On those days he ate his own shadow. It tasted of dust and felt greasy in his mouth but it kept him full...and there was a plentiful supply. Once he had ripped his shadow off another grew

a few seconds later. Hurrah! They would not see him ever going hungry no matter how much they wished he would. They plotted against him daily. Each day they had a new plan. Yesterday they poisoned his brain with a golden spray that came through his letter box! He simply grew a new brain by holding his breath and squeezing himself like toothpaste. He knew all the tricks. Once he stormed a giant sandcastle by the sea with a massive tooth as his only weapon. The lumps of grey material that lived in the castle simply came apart under the force of his tooth. He sold their remains to a shop. He kept their clammy clothes in a box under his bed. He wrote stories about them and laughed at the top of his voice. He styled his hair to look like their hair and then he stormed around the city screaming and crying.

Stibb dishes out some mind parasites and begins to eat them. He prises open their shells and scoops out their black innards. They taste of wine and sweets.

Later he visits his pal Brixworn who lives on Street Avenue. He licks his face with his green tongue. He says the word "Hustle" to him over and over. He takes off the rings on his fingers and puts them back on again in different configurations. He sprays his brown corduroy clothes with liquid wax. He draws his swollen yellow head over and over and burns the pictures as he weeps and laughs. He cooks Brixworn a nice meal of grey meat that grows like fungus in Brixworn's cellar. He switches on the TV and flicks through the channels continuously, thumping his own chest.

Brixworn has no idea who Stibb is. Brixworn has only been around for a few months. He was found in a red shoe hanging from an oak tree. In just a few months he had grown into full height and moved into Street Avenue. Now Stibb visited him and he had no idea why.

Stibb leaves Brixworn's home and heads for the cafe under the bridge. He orders a plate of crisps and tomato sauce. He sits in the window seat and watches the police. They are dragging a body out of the river again. They always are. Last week it was a fairy with dragon wings. Now it's a werewolf wearing scuba gear and a sombrero.

Later Stibb walks in the deserted fields. Nothing grows here. The soil is grey and dusty. The trees are dead and skeletons sit beneath them. Once Stibb had slept under one of the trees and he had dreamt he was a skeleton dancing with

other skeletons. He promised himself never to do that again but knew he would break that promise.

Dark Channel Of Huge

She walks the city at dawn as the sun is being reborn into the blue field of the sky. Men in black coats and hats, their pale faces covered with grey scarves, stalk the alleys with knives in their hands. They run when they see her. They whisper behind walls. They clap their hands behind tall corrugated metal fences. They crawl up piles of scrap iron and take photos of her.

She knows what they are. They are the spirits of aborted babies. They are the souls of abandoned children who drowned. They are the ghosts of orphans who killed themselves rather than being adopted.

And she knew how to help them. They needed to visit the sweetshop in the snow. She herself had visited the sweetshop in the snow. She had found it one day while walking in the woods on Christmas day. The shop had glowed in the snowy gloom. There was silent music coming from it that brought her closer. She had been afraid at first, but when she had pressed her face to the window and looked at the trays of colourful sweets all that fear became bliss.

She had been a troubled spirit before she had found the sweetshop in the snow. She had painted pictures of dead animals that were coming to life. She had written stories about bones and meat. She had eaten the herbs that grew in the wasteland. She had dived into black water and tasted the mud. She had fallen in love with decaying buildings and slept in them for weeks on end. She had been lost. She had been poisoned by the stinging kiss of night. She had prayed to a God that was just as fallen as her. She had worn black dresses that she bought from dusty shops on the edge of the city. She had stroked the grey worms that grew in her dead garden. She had dreamt of pale machines that became monstrous severed heads.

But the sweetshop in the snow had helped her. She had not been allowed into

the shop because that was not possible just now, but she had seen it and seen what it contained. She had stared at the dark rainbow sweet wrappings, at the glinting lights of their mystery. And as she stared, as if tasting the sweets with her eyes, the shining wrappings had transformed. They became Gods. That is how she saw it, anyway. They were the high spirits from another world. And she remembered them. She remembered that she had been one of them once. A long time ago. And the grief had hit her hard. The grief of loss. And how loving was that pain. She had buckled with the passionate pain and let out a wail of grief and loss. And then the sweetshop in the snow had vanished. But it was a kind vanishing. For she was meant to follow.

It took her years to figure out that fact. Meanwhile she had found glimpses of the sweetshop in her daily mundane life. She heard it in music. She saw it in art. She saw it in rain puddles marred by iridescent oil. She bought colourful dresses and saw the sweetshop in the mirror. She saw the sweetshop when the sun rose. The sky was the doorway to the sweetshop. The entire world was the map to the location of the shop. She knew this much to be true. She just needed to understand how the world could be reconfigured so that more of the sweetshop was visible.

She had exchanged loss for longing. She still felt the grief that the sweetshop had triggered in her being, but she was glad of it because that pain was the only pathway back to the sweetshop. And all those men in hats and coats carrying knives needed that pain too.

They needed one form of grief to be transformed into a truer form of grief. Then they would no longer run from her. Then they would no longer carry knives. They would instead paint pictures of rainbows and write stories of colour.

And as she did they would walk in the woods every Christmas day.

Why You Cry

There are several oddly shaped yellow objects in the red room. They are lying on the green carpet as if dead. They have weird structures sprouting from their rounded bases, nodules and streaks of matter.

They begin to move. They rock to and fro. Then in unison they fly into the centre of the room and become one shape.

Gooj is now stood there, yawning and stretching his arms above his head.

Gooj begins his day stabbing his bed. It is a tiny blue bed in an upper chamber of his home. He stabs it with a golden blade and whimpers.

Next Gooj eats. He finds food in his pantry. It is mostly purple and square but there are also black spheres that make a humming noise when he bites into them with his long yellow teeth.

He rubs his belly after his feast and weeps silver tears.

Later he stares at the TV. Finally he switches it on and watches green animals chasing red animals. The green animals catch the red animals and strangle them with their stubby hands before scuttling away into holes in the ground. Men come and collect the bodies of the red animals and dance with them and screaming can be heard, although it was not the men screaming.

Gooj lights his pipe and turns over the TV to another channel. Here are women in flesh coloured dresses stood on the end of a tall block of stone. People are pelting them with black balls attempting to unbalance them. The last woman standing wins their memories back. The losers are doomed to wander the city never to know who they are. The show has been going for years and by now there are hundreds of lost people in the city who have no idea what their own name is or where they live.

Gooj smokes his pipe, issuing green smoke. He sometimes makes soft noises and his face twitches.

Gooj screams.

Gooj leaves the house and feels the cool breeze on his face and hands. The

sun rains down on him and the moon sits nearby as if chasing the sun to cover it. Gooj walks towards the city centre passing almost invisible people. Some of them are more visible than Gooj and to them he smiles and says "Good day to you." Black thoughts sit in Gooj's belly. Some may call them emotions but he knows better.

Gooj finds a small park crushed between two screaming factories. He plays on the swings, laughing. Then he had a go on the roundabout, spinning and spinning until he felt sick. He lay on a small hill to recover. When he felt ok he took out his notebook and pen and scribbled down random words. He would select an address from the phone book and send the random words to them in a letter. He has done this hundreds of times. He knows it will have some effect on the city but he does not know how it will manifest. In time he will have changed the entire city. Maybe for the better, maybe for the worse. He did not care which.

Gooj walks down dusty, litter clustered alleyways between warehouses and palaces. He comes to a ditch where red people fish. Gooj watches them for a few minutes before carrying on. He crosses a wide bridge over the ditch and ventures into a graveyard. Headstones spring from spikey clumps of grass and marble skulls wait on ornate poles. Gooj notices a group of people having a picnic amongst the graves. He creeps up on them and takes out his pipe. He lights his pipe and takes deep puffs feeling his mind rising like the green smoke. He watches the picnic for half an hour before one of the people notice him. They smile and reach into a basket. They take out a silver globular thing and bite into it.

Gooj leaves the graveyard and heads down a thin road between a brown pub and a row of grey houses. Cobwebs were hung up like curtains in all the windows of the houses and large fake spiders sat on window ledges about to pounce on plastic flies or maybe plastic people.

Gooj takes a left and finds himself in a red street. Black birds crouch in alleyways, their eyes glinting like beads of oil. Gooj hears a sound and looks behind him. There was someone walking towards him. He was skeleton thin and grey coloured. His long hair drooped to his boney shoulders. He was grinning. Gooj could feel music coming from the man. The music was so complicated that it defied genre and style.

Gooj walks on. He locates a gap between two red houses and finds himself on a busy street of shops and shoppers. There was a parade of cars creeping along between the crowded pavements like strange beetles. Some of the people carrying shopping were not real and some were realer than Gooj. He could tell just by looking and feeling. His stomach feels empty so he looks for a bakery. He finds a cake shop between a shoe shop and a tobacconists. There are many fine buns sitting in the window. Large plastic toads sit between the trays of brightly iced buns and slices of cake. Here and there are rubber hands with nails painted blue.

Gooj went into the cake shop. A thin woman with a rubber snake coiled around her neck was serving behind the glass counter. She has black eyes and eyelashes so long they look like spider legs.

"I'll have one of your buns from the window, please,"Gooj says.

"Of course, sir," the woman responds with a high pitched voice.

The woman fetchs the bun as Gooj peruses the wares in the glass cases. There are cakes with what looks like broken glass on top of them. There are buns shaped like fat fingers complete with fingernails and bloody stumps. Amongst the food are plastic eyes and rubber tongues.

The woman returns and puts the bun in a white paper bag.

"That will be fifty two pence, please."

Gooj fishes into his pocket and produces the correct amount of coins. He hands the money to the woman and takes the bun.

Gooj bites the bun and chews its sugary substance as he walks. He could feel music again. He looks over his shoulder and sees the thin grey man. He is still grinning.

"You going to eat all that by yourself?" The man asks.

"I beg your pardon?" Gooj says.

"If you give me half I'll show you something horrible," the man says.

"You mean it?" Gooj asks.

"I mean it," promises the thin man and held out his hand. His fingernails are long and purple. They are claws.

Gooj takes another bite out of the bun and hands the rest of it to the thin man. The man rips the paper bag open with his bright claws and eats the sweet contents in one go.

"That was better than fairy beef. Follow me," the man says before walking down a side street that Gooj has never noticed before.

Gooj follows.

The walls of the alleyway are covered in yellow moss that brushes Gooj's arms. The walls seemed to slant as they walk as if the space were shrinking. Then the walls end at a crossroads. The thin man turns right so Gooj follows him. Gooj keeps feeling the music coming from the man changing pitch and volume. He tries to identify the instrument being played but it seems impossible to do so.

The alleyway takes them past rows of dirty looking gardens where plants grow untended and wild. Gooj has never seen vegetation like it except in nightmares. Fluting purple creatures sprout here and there, reaching out to him. Some have eyes and mouths with sharp black teeth. And here was a tree with fat white fruits dangling from it that dare him to pick from it. The smell is awful, like something from an evil factory that has caught fire.

The gardens ends and Gooj is happy about it. But now they were travelling by a black ditch where dolls in their dozens have been dumped. Some were half in and half out of the dark mud, some were floating in the thin water. Gooj could hear a child crying somewhere. It was too coincidental. Too apt.

"Is this what you intended to show me?" Gooj says to the thin man.

"Is it?" The man asks.

They walk on. The ditch ends at the corner of a brick factory. The path turns

left and Gooj sees windows of houses. They look derelict, abandoned. The windows are dusty but Gooj can see things pressing against the glass. They are moving and pale. Gooj can see legs or arms. Their journey brings them close to the windows but Gooj can still not make out what the shapes are. Whatever they are they are trying to escape.

They pass the windows and find themselves in an alley so thin that Gooj has to turn his shoulders to fit.

Gooj hears the sound of glass breaking behind him. He looks back to see the source of the noise and sees pale figures rushing towards him.

"Can we move a little faster?" Gooj asks his thin guide. Gooj turns back to see if the man has heard him but sees no one. There is just a blank brick wall in his way.

Small Black Plastic Knife Held By A Frozen Purple Hand Is Singing To A Small Black Plastic Bird In A Small Black Plastic Tree That Is Dancing Ever So Slightly

Hinox is chopping up a white cube with a red carving knife. Hinox is wearing a turquoise smock and turquoise pants. His unruly green hair is getting in his black eyes and he keeps smearing his hair away from his eyes across his balding scalp. Hinox has been doing this for seventy seven seconds. Hinox has been timing his act by the large purple grandfather clock standing in the corner of the grey room. He stops cutting the white cube and picks at the curved shavings. He eats them for seventy seven seconds and begins to slice at the cube again. There is something silver appearing on the floor. The more Hinox eats the shavings from the white cube the bigger the silver thing becomes. Soon it is as large as a sleeping dog.

Hinox puts down his knife and trots to the silver thing. He crouches and

touches it. He strokes its smoothness. He does this for seventy seven seconds. As he strokes the silver thing a golden thing begins to appear in the room. After the seventy seven seconds are up he turns his attention to the golden thing, which is no bigger than a cat's head. He pokes it with his thumb over and over for seventy seven seconds. As he prods the golden thing a sound can be heard. It is a steady whine which increases in volume each time Hinox prods the golden thing.

When Hinox stops prodding the golden thing the sound is quite loud and seems to be coming from the purple grandfather clock.

Hinox puts his gnarled ear to the belly of the clock and imitates the sound with his lumpy mouth.

Black light swarms from his eyes and encircles his mishapen head.

Later Hinox walks the wonky blue streets, the black light swirling around his head like a smokey fish. People with little orange arms notice him and stare as they pass. Some of them follow Hinox. Hinox smiles. The little armed people need someone to follow or they would be just another horror in the city. He would make them see their purpose in full. He just needs to decide what that purpose is. Maybe they will find their own white cubes to carve up and eat. Maybe they will follow his magic and develop their own black light halo.

Years later Hinox had transformed into many things. He had been a gangly skeleton thin entity that danced in people's sheds. He had been a pile of green limbs reaching out to touch people who passed by too close. He had been a cloud of yellow thumbs flying through the air, rapping on windows. He had been a wet beige chair sitting in the wasteland waiting for tired wanderers to come and sit on him...only to hear his screams.

Now he is a faceless man carrying a white umbrella through sunny streets by the swimming baths. The little orange armed people had followed him through all his transformations at a polite distance, watching and waiting for their own enlightenment. It never came to them. It never would.

Hinox is not bothered by their lack of development. He is beyond caring what

happens or does not happen to other people. He has helped many people to see what is possible. And that is all he ever could have done.

"And if you believe that you'll believe anything," Hinox says.

Tight Tight Tight Slack

(The baby is not real)

The oak tree sways in the jangling wind. Jurto sways also. He is trying to become the tree and the wind. The grass is black in the park. The bushes are dark grey. But everything is alive. Maybe it is just the wind that is alive. Jurto does not know. It is a matter of philosophy. Everything is alive in the city and everything in the city is dead. There is perhaps an inbetween state. But Jurto has no way of divining that. Jurto is blue putty with a flexible rubber face and hands.

Jurto fights with his shadow. He does not know if it is a real fight.

Jurto eats something yellow that he finds on a low brick wall. It tastes of sugary vegetables.

Jurto touches a drawing on a building. It looks like a black sun with many grey arms. It has a single green eye in the centre. He does not think he is worshipping. But he cannot be sure.

Jurto skips through a blue alleyway where black litter rots. Black books with black pages lie here like dead crows. Jurto stops and picks up one of the books. It is damp. It is half decayed. You would need a white pen to write in it, he figures. Jurto throws down the book to allow it to continue its transformation into rubbish and further into dirt.

Jurto sees something blue exploding in the distance. He hears wild piano

music.

Jurto sits on a large pale stone. He feels something tingling up his legs and into his head. There is something wrong with the stone. Or something right. He does not know if he likes the tingling. He wonders what it will do to him. Maybe it will give him power. Maybe it will take away his power.

Jurto sees a purple snake with lots of green legs in an untidy garden. He hears the whimpering of a frightened animal in the long yellow grass. Jurto watches the snake walking into the long grass. There is a struggle and the tail of the snake curls up. There is the sound of a bell ringing. The snake is dragged into the long grass and Jurto feels a sharp stab of fear. He likes the fear. It is like he has never felt fear before, but he knows he has. He felt it in his house when he first saw his bed. The blankets were white and bobbly. They smelt of animals. He had smelt animals in the zoo, where he first woke up and knew his name.

Jurto finds a ten pound note down a street of green zig-zagging buildings. The buildings smelled of chemicals and their windows were painted red. Tall black chimneys sprouted from the green walls here and there. The chimneys gave off yellow smoke. Jurto put the ten pound note in his pocket and looked for a shop.

Jurto finds a shop. It is a sweet shop. It has chocolate coloured walls with sparkly purple window frames. All manner of sweets and chocolates sit on a tray in the window. Jurto peers through the glass. A tall fat man was standing inside, looking at him. He was smiling, his tongue sticking out. Jurto went inside. The fat man made a motion with his hands as if to show off his counter. The counter was glass and full of sweets in shiny packaging. Jurto found the shop a little too dark. Shadows hid most of the shop. The sweets glowed in the dark like lights.

"Make your choice," says the man, pointing into the gloom. His voice sounds like a woman's.

"I don't know what I like," says Jurto. All the sweets seem to be as glorious as the next. He couldn't decide.

"Shall I pick for you? It is uncommon but has happened before," the man says before dancing behind his counter into the darkest part of the shop. Jurto tries to see where the man has gone but cannot. He can only hear the sound of wrappers rustling. Soon the man comes back into the light with something in his large hands.

"Grandma's Milky Vomit," the man says with delight in his voice. He opens his hands and shows Jurto a white package with the face of an old woman on it.

"Sounds scrummy," Jurto says. He reaches for the sweets being offered.

"Fifty pence, my lad," says the fat man.

Jurto leaves the shop with change chiming in his pocket and the sweet clutched in his hand.

Jurto looks at the wrapper of the sweet. The face of the old lady is being sick. Jurto laughs and rips the packaging open at the top. He slides the sweet out onto his hand. It fills his little hand. It is white with wobbly edges. There are orange bits in the sweet. Jurto admires the solid splash of candy for a few seconds. Then he takes a bite. It tastes of milk...and carrots. There is a bitter aftertaste. But he takes another bite. He skips down the street eating the sweet.

Jurto walks home. He feels tired. He must go to bed. He will probably have the dream again. The dream where he wakes up in a strange but familiar bed. Where he dresses in a grey suit and gets into a car. The dream where he goes to work in a building. The dream where he watches TV for hours before going back to bed. The dream that makes him feel sad.

(The baby is real)

Not Wearing A Hat

Joog wakes up in the park. The last thing he recalls is having a fight with a small purple dog. He was winning too. The dog had bitten his fingers but not drawn blood. Joog has never bled. Joog doubts he even has blood. His skin is pure white and his hair is pure black. His eyes are pure yellow orbs with tiny black pupils.

Joog walks home. He is not sure where he lives. Someone had rearranged the streets again. Where once there was factories chimneys vomitting red smoke now there are cottages with black roses growing around them. Sometimes there were houses that did not look like houses. They were too thin and twisted. It frightened him to think who lived there. He hoped he did not bump into any of them. So far the streets were deserted. It must be early morning, he figured.

Then the bells begin to chime. First they were muffled, distant. Then they grew louder. He could discern a tune. It was a jolly tune. But then the people began to appear. They were being woken by the bells, or conjured by them. There must be factories nearby. They often had alarms to raise the sleepers to work. Joog had never worked. He did not know why. He was being kept for a higher purpose, maybe. He had developed a power over the years. He could shape the world. If he wanted money it came to him. If he wanted clothes, he found them. He could manifest anything but love. But then he did not have a care for love. Love was for other people. People who were not being kept for a higher purpose.

Joog begins to see people. They are mostly orange in colour. Orange skin, orange clothes. He wondered who they were. The people he normally saw were green. People generally kept away from him. They recognised that he should be alone. Whatever his higher purpose was it did not involve them for now. These orange people were smiling. This worries Joog. Smiley people are often friendly. Friendly people said things like "Hello there". He didn't know how to respond to such statements. You say hello to someone and before you know it you are being invited to parties. Parties frightened Joog most of all. He had seen one once. People singing and drinking and dancing.

They looked and acted like animals. Animals tore you to pieces. Like the purple dog had tried to do. He could not recall why he had been fighting the dog. It must have smelled something special about Joog. It was jealous.

Soon the orange people disappear and that was when Joog found the foot. It was simply standing there on the pavement. It was green. He didn't know how to respond. What should he do? Was this the foot of one of his usual neighbours? What had happened? A dark thought solidifies in his silver mind. The green people had been attacked by the orange people. They had been massacred and replaced. This foot was a leftover. No doubt one of the orange people would find it and take it somewhere, maybe to one of the factories that were hidden away behind the houses.

Joog begins to panic. Would they do the same to him? Would they kill him and take his body to the furnace of some factory? Maybe that's how they power the factories?

Joog had to find some orange paint and quickly.

Three Hammers

I wake up around nine o'clock and beat my wife up. Her blonde head exploding this way and that like something I'm hallucinating. Like a memory, trickling down a child's eye. Or a dog tussling with a bone. I can feel the bone becoming a stew as I hit it about. Later I open the front door and stab an old lady in the neck. It makes me feel like I've just successfully worked out how to use my new high class VCR, and yes the picture IS so very clear. All this love in my life makes me want my breakfast, which is being served up by my wife right now.

I close the front door, and hear the gargling of the old lady vanish like stolen handbags. So much love in my life.

My wife dies half way through the baked beans, so I cut her up and make her skin into an umbrella, which I will use for a few days before chucking it through a charity shop window. I will no doubt see some fat bastard using it

some time or another, and feel that special feeling, like when you sharpen a pencil in front of the teacher, and he or she shivers and tosses his or her head back repeatedly.

And begins to smell of rubies.

Later I drive my car into town and knock a few prams down. They smash like glass, and each tiny fragment is an entry in my diary. Breaking down white light into primary colours. It makes me feel like chlorine in the water at the swimming baths. I am the King of Dover. They will not see me naked again, mother. And we will not pick brambles by the road side, crying and seeing trains on the clotted horizon.

No.

Later I go to the football match, stretching my Freddy Krueger bicep tattoos. My bald head fucking with everyone's view. I cheer and stab. Cheer and slice, It makes me feel like I broke wind in a waiting room at the station, and there's an empty suitcase flapping open on the floor. I charge onto the pitch and sodomise a fat bastard as the game goes on. Making me feel like I just sold a jacket to a man and the jacket wasn't half worth it. Or that I'm hidden in a dumpster and some drunk guy has come along to puke in it and I've slit his throat and all the puke comes sliding out through the slit.

Something like that.

So much love in my life.

I walk home through rainy death streets. All the underpasses are sparkling like a song you wrote and someone liked it enough to buy it. I grab a woman underneath the rectangular scream of a tower block and break her arms. The snap sounds like...like...like...

...no we won't buy clothes together, will we mummy...we won't get an orange drink on the long walk to the beach...can I have a bucket and spade...can I?

Later I climb up someone's drain pipe and masturbate while some fat ginger cunt shaves his beard off in a window. It makes me feel like I got my best

friend's joke and I'm laughing as hard as he is, and he's wearing red trousers and has no dad. And his big sister shares a room with him, and he has nightmares about...bees. I toss a few coins at the window and go home thinking about how mathematical the streets are. Like a graph of unacceptable tallies.

I head home and stab a man so hard he lets go of his kids and sinks down dead. The kids run off screaming like apes. Their faces looking just like mine now. If I had my car, or a gun...

The police are on TV when I get home, and I wank myself with a piece of liver as they pull bodies out of ditches, take photos of gaping mouths and dream of those days when as a child their mother would take them along to dance classes for older girls. And they would have to sit and watch the legs and the arms moving from a cracked chair that was neither wood nor plastic but some kind of hybrid. I watch this all night and then go to bed. I dream about tractors pulling up the earth as it snows. The white covering up all the work. It makes me feel like I'm checking out pamphlets advertising some kind of historical display. Wax Tudors pointing at baskets of eggs...so much love in my life.

The Move

Mr Marks heard the shrill sound of children laughing as the estate agent pulled the car up to the kerb. The houses were large, old enough to have seen the last hundred years pass by, without touching them too much. Front gardens too, boiling over railings with a froth of greenery and selective dots and dashes of colour. Mr Marks gripped his wife's cool hand and smiled with a look in his eye that could only be appreciated by her. She gripped his hand back and copied his smile.
“The area looks lovely,” she said.

The estate agent turned the car off and cast a look over his shoulder, his tanned square of a face resting on his bright white short sleeved shirt.

“It's probably one of the best areas we have property in, great for a new family just starting out.” He unlocked his door and slid out, a large bunch of keys jangling out the side of his fist.” Great if your kids have left home, too,” he added, leaning his face in through the door.

Mr and Mrs Marks climbed out of the car and straightened their clothes as the agent locked the doors with his remote.
“There's very little crime in the area, this gives peace of mind.”
“Yes,” Mr Marks agreed. “That's what we want, above all.”
He looked along the length of the avenue, noting how either ends seemed to be beyond reach; a trick caused by thick gardens and a subtle bending of the road.
“It's very quiet. Is this normal for this time of day?”
“Good question. You've done this before. Well, this is around early noon and it is a week day, but it doesn't get much busier than this. The avenue doesn't really lead anywhere so you won't get too much traffic cutting through. As you can see most of the houses have no garages so the roadside is used for parking, but, well, there's no hourly parade.”
The agent laughed and busied himself with the bunch of keys. Each had a paper tag.
“Ah, here it is, number 179. We'll have a look around, shall we?”

Mr Marks inspected the neighbours' gardens as they waited for the agent to unlock the porch doors. They were mostly as tidy as he expected, and saw few signs of life; A boy's blue bicycle peeking from behind the side of number 183, and a large pink cardboard box with a picture of a doll's house printed on the side waiting by a swollen black bin bag at number 177.
The agent tugged the porch doors open and began to fiddle around for the key to the front door.
“The gardens are locally quite well known, Mr Marks. I believe they have small competitions and such. For the better ones. I have a cousin who lives in the next avenue.”
“The gardens are lovely,”Mrs Marks admitted, her high heeled shoes squeaking on the paving as she spun around to look.

The rooms were white and empty, Mr Marks saw. There was a smell of paint. Although none of the walls looked freshly decorated.

“The banister has been painted right up to the attic room,” the agent said, scratching his nose with the front door key, and jangling the bunch. His white shirt made the walls look grubby.
“This is of course the front room, never been knocked through into the back room. So far. Always an option.”
Mrs Marks' high heels echoed in another part of the house. As slow and thought-out as if attending a display at an art gallery.
“Double glazed, but you can have it removed without damaging the original frames...”
Mr Marks nodded and walked around the spacious room, allowing the agent's voice to blur at the back of his thoughts.

They found Mrs Marks in the kitchen, peering out of the window onto the green rectangle of the back garden. A small tool shed crouched in one corner like a guard's hut, left unattended.
“Ah, Mrs Marks, you'll be wanting to know about the plumbing for your appliances.”
She looked at him and smiled without opening her mouth.
“Can we go outside?”

“The fencing is not too high, but you can extend as far as ten feet if you choose. We can do that for you.”
“We do like our privacy,” Mr Marks said, walking to the end of the garden where the sound of children's laughter was loudest.
“Your neighbours are a great bunch. We have a few houses for let on the avenues. So any problems with noise or things like that it's best to contact us first, in case it's one of our tenants. But I don't think you'll have any complaints. The price bracket is pretty exclusive. You were lucky to have first offer on this place.”
Mrs Marks followed her husband, as he walked the entire perimeter of the garden.
“We love it.” He said.

* * *

Mr Marks pulled the car up outside the house and switched off the engine. He looked at his wife until she turned and gave him a broad smile.

“This won't take long,” he told her.” But let's both go.”
She nodded and they climbed out of the car and slammed the doors. Mr Marks went around the back of the car and unlocked the trunk. A large brown suitcase filled most of the space. He took it by the handle and pulled it upright.
“Can you unlock the doors for me?” he asked his wife, handing her the bunch of keys. She took them and walked ahead of him as he hoisted the suitcase out of the car and slammed the trunk shut.

By the time he had carried it to the house his wife had both the porch and the front door unlocked.

“Come in with me, won't you,” he said, when she stepped out of his way.
She nodded and followed him into the house.

Mr Marks laid the suitcase down on its side in the front room and stood up. He walked quickly to the bay windows and peered out, checking all the gardens and what he could see of the road. Things were quiet, being early noon.
“We can do it now,” he said.
His wife gave him a smile that said little, but he understood. He walked to her and put his hand on her arm.
“You go back to the car. I'll do it all.”
He listened to her high heels find their way outside and down the path. When he heard the slam of the car door he knelt down by the suitcase. He stroked the slightly raised flank of it, feeling the coolness.
Then he found the zip and worked it open, slowly parting the teeth. Once he had it completely undone, and could easily lift the flap with his finger, he let it flop back onto the contents of the suitcase and stood up.

“You'll soon find your way around,” he said, as a thin leg that ended at a small dirty red shoe slipped out of the opening in the suitcase.
The leg was dressed in tight fitting trousers, striped, and grimy like the footwear. A second leg slipped out, identical to the first. A sound like a high pitched whine escaped the case as the legs began to slowly stretch out to their full length.

“You'll soon remember what to do,” Mr Marks said, turning to leave. He undid the bolt on the back door and opened it a little.

“It won't take long to work it out,” he said, more to himself, than anyone. Then he left the house and climbed into the car and drove away, hearing the sound of children's laughter in a garden further up the avenue

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